

# Minnesota Women: Income & Poverty



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# THE POVERTY POPULATION

Most American women marry. Many now also separate or divorce. Some are deserted. A number find their marriages broken by death. Some survive their husbands into elderly widowhood. And still others — teenagers, in particular — leap right over marriage into motherhood.

For some women, these events may mean prolonged dislocation and an extended effort at adjustment to a new way of living. For others, it may be a transitory period before marriage or remarriage. But for most, for whatever span of time they are alone, it means being poor. Despite the fact that divorced and

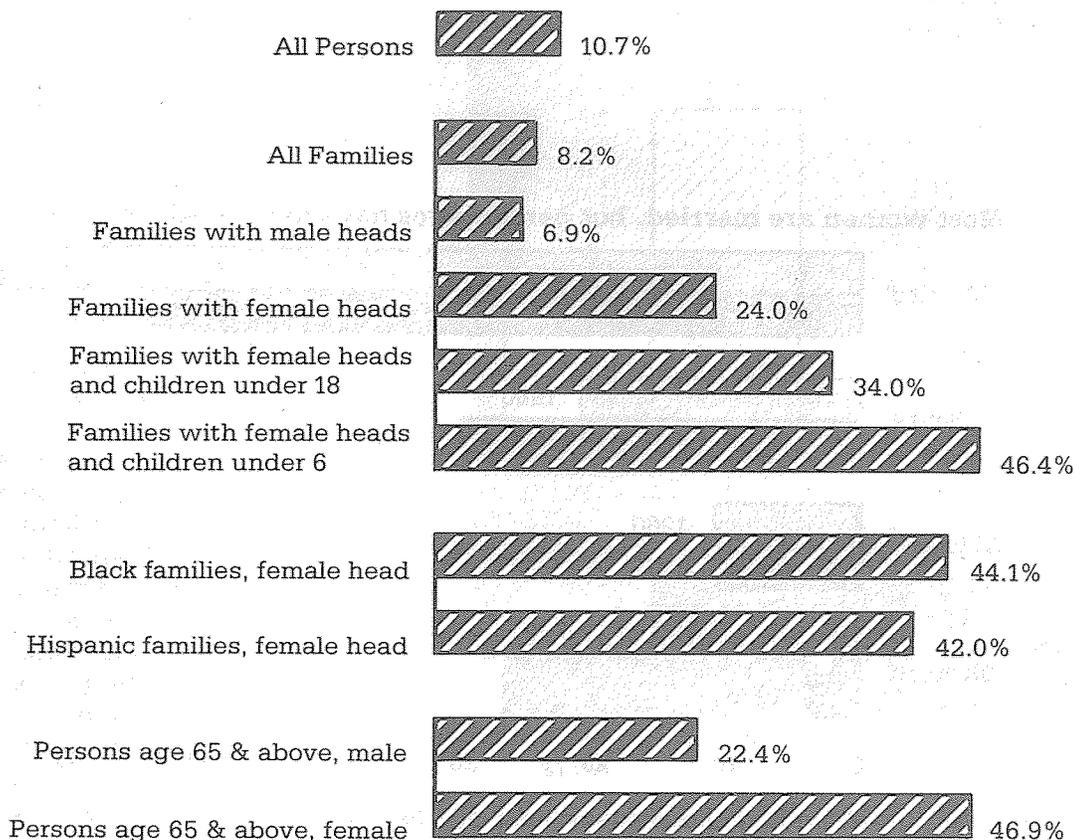
separated women are now the most likely of all women to be in the labor force, the female-headed household is synonymous with poverty.

While 'poverty' may be a relative term, with the interpretation of being poor meaning different things to different people, the term as used here will conform to federal government definitions. The poverty statistics in this report are those used in census reports, and are based on a definition originated by the Social Security Administration in 1964 and subsequently modified by a Federal Interagency Committee.

The index provides a range of poverty income cutoffs adjusted by such factors as family size, sex of the family head, number of children under 18 years old, and farm and nonfarm residence. These poverty income cutoffs are revised annually to allow for changes in the cost of living as reflected in the Consumer Price Index. In 1975, the poverty thresholds ranged from \$2,574 for a female unrelated individual 65 years old and over living on a farm to \$9,056 for a nonfarm family with a male head and with seven or more persons. The average poverty threshold for a nonfarm family of four headed by a male was \$5,502.

## Incidence of poverty is high for women

Percent of group below poverty level, 1970

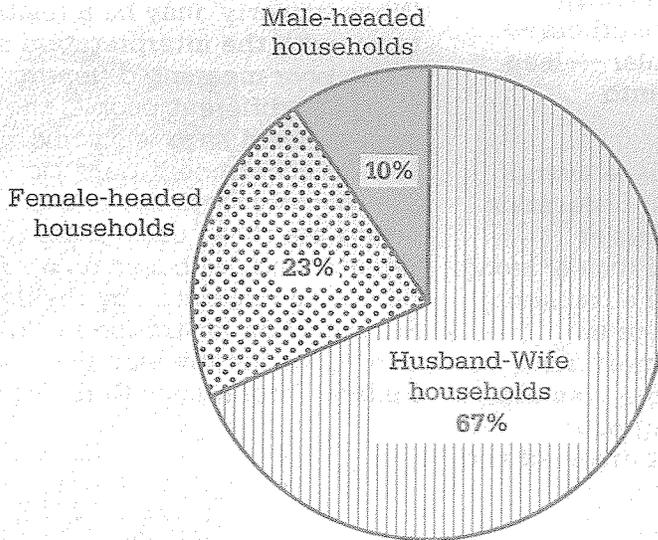


Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census

Changes in family and household structure in recent years have resulted in dramatic shifts in the poverty population. Among these changes is a large increase in the number of women who are alone; of if not alone, responsible for the support of young children. Although husband-wife families still constitute a substantial majority of all households, this family form is steadily losing ground to other household types. In the last fifteen years in Minnesota, there has been a significant increase in the proportion of women who are single, widowed, or divorced, and a corresponding decrease in the number of women who are married. In Minnesota in 1975, almost a quarter of all households were headed by women.

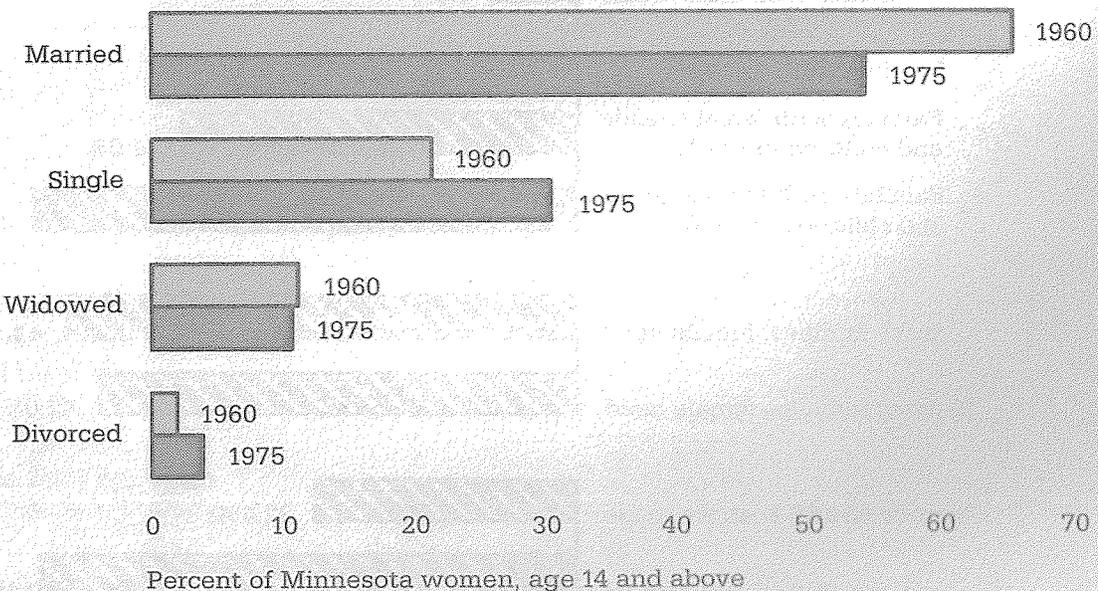
Differences in marital patterns and the low economic status related to race make single-headedness even more pronounced in black families. In 1970, of the total of 7,504 black families in Minnesota, 2,136 — or 28 percent — were female-headed.

**In 1975, almost one in four households in Minnesota was female-headed**



Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census (estimated)

**Most women are married, but percentages have decreased since 1960**



Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census (1975 estimated)

Myth would have it that women control most of the wealth of this country. The popular wisdom also holds that great numbers of widowed or divorced American women live in idleness and luxury on money inherited from husbands or fathers or awarded from ex-husbands through generous alimony settlements.

Neither belief is true.

Money divides sharply along sex lines, with males earning and controlling the bulk of it. In general, women not only do not own or control any appreciable amount of wealth or number of investments, their income is usually considerably lower than their male counterparts.

The reasons for this are not hard to find. Women's training and expectations, the time they spend earning, low wages for "women's work," and rapid inflation all combine to provide dramatically lower incomes for women.

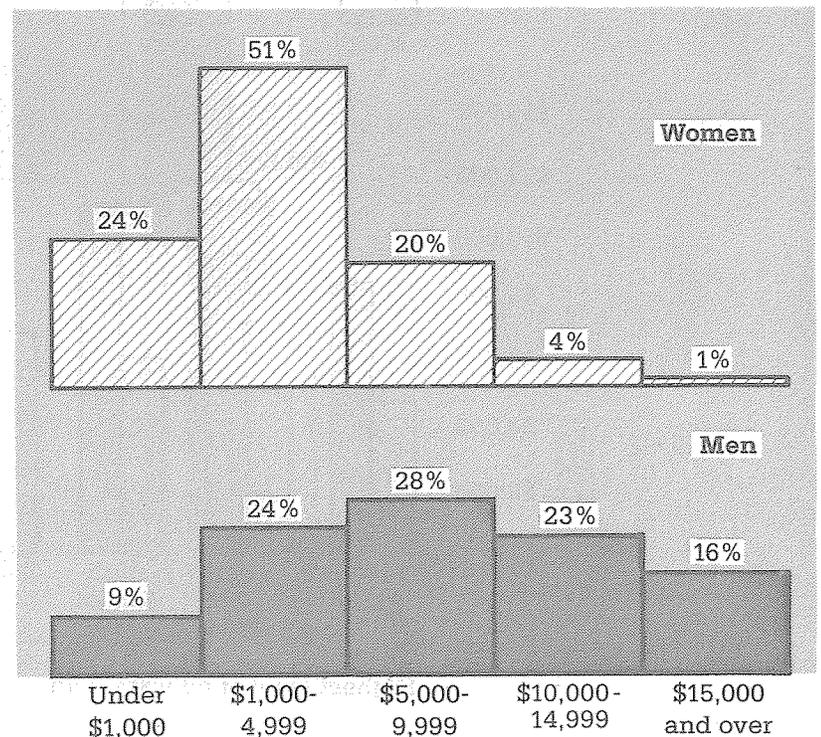
**TRAINING.** Most women have not been trained to take their vocational plans seriously or to make money for themselves over any extended span of time. Most are expected to marry, and once married, to know just enough about money to be thrifty with the family income. Paid jobs are seen as temporary or stopgap measures: "until the baby comes," or "to put the kids through college." Women's principal concern about money is that it provide security — day-to-day living and a shelter for a "rainy day" or their old age. Women have not been encouraged to even speculate about a future separate from a husband's, a future that might be without a male's income, pension, or insurance. It is only when this income is gone, and she must provide her own, and perhaps her children's support, that a woman realizes her economic vulnerability.

**TIME AT WORK.** Most basic income is earned through full-time work, but few women expect to work full-time throughout their lives. Despite the enormous rise of the number of women in the labor force, less than one-third of all American females are now employed full-time all year. The rest of the women in the labor force fall into two other work patterns: working part-time throughout the year; or working temporarily during the year, either on a part-time or full-time basis.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the women most likely to be working full-time, year-round are women without children, black women, and women in managerial jobs and in professions. Most female-dominated professions — nurses, librarians, teachers — include large numbers of part-time or part-year workers. Non-professional jobs in which vast numbers of women work — waitresses, salespersons, clerical workers — also provide for less than full-time work.

While the flexibility of these part-time arrangements can be important to women with family responsibilities, they also contribute to women's low average income compared to men's.

Women's earned income tends to be low



Income earned per year in Minnesota, 1973

**LOW WAGES.** Most women work at unglamorous jobs, not in careers. And most of these jobs are characterized by high percentages of other women workers. Occupational segregation has held steady for a generation, and may indeed be greater now than in 1900. Clerical workers, sales workers, service workers outside the home, and operatives in industry have included more than two-thirds of employed women since the Second World War. And it is in these jobs that the demand for workers continues to expand.

Society has for some time accepted the idea that it is all right for women to work in the labor market if they do jobs that

are "suited" to them, and wherever possible, related in some way to the ones they do at home. Thus, women teach children, care for the sick, serve as "office wives," operate telephone switchboards, set hair, manicure nails, sew or stitch, sell clothing, cosmetics and other items appropriately "feminine," cook or serve food, clean houses or offices, or work in factory jobs not particularly prized by men. They do not make much money, certainly not what males earn.

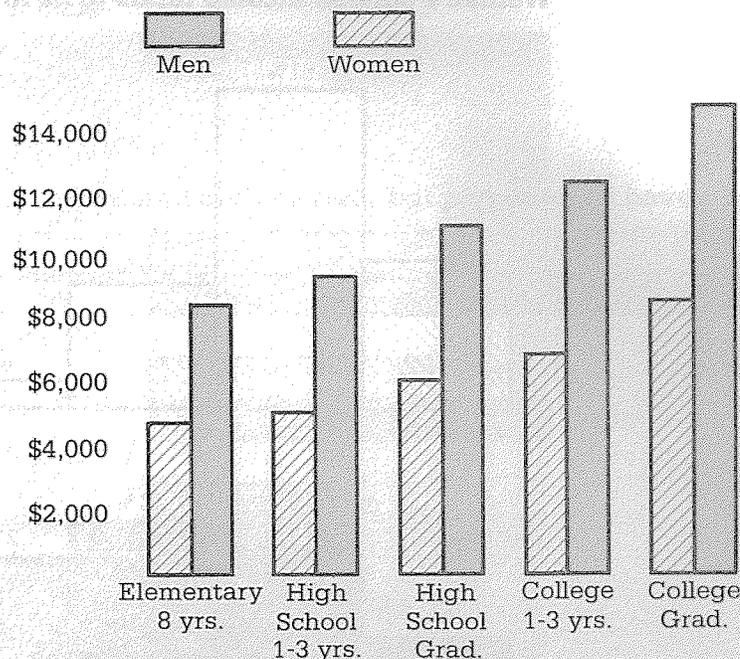
This inequity in pay is not altogether the result of totally different occupations. It is also due, in considerable measure, to the fact that even within occupations women tend to hold jobs which are the least valued and which pay the least.

Waitresses frequently earn less than waiters, cooks than chefs, "barmaids" than bartenders, beauticians than hair stylists, matrons than custodians, hostesses than maitre d's.

Education does not help a woman nearly to the extent that it helps a man. Women high school graduates who are full-time year-round workers earn on the average 55.7 percent of the earnings of male high school graduates. Women college graduates who are full-time year-round workers earn on the average 58.7 percent of the earnings of male college graduates. In fact, women high school graduates earn on the average about the same as a man with only an eighth grade education.

**Women of all educational levels receive on the average, lower wages than men**

Median income per year for full-time, year-round workers



Highest level of education attained, U.S. 1972

Source: U.S. Department of Labor

**INFLATION.** Rapid inflation has also contributed to women's lower incomes. As wages rise, raises are often given as a percent of present wages, so that the dollar amount for low-paid workers is less than the dollar amount for high-paid workers. Women's earned income does not therefore keep pace with men's.

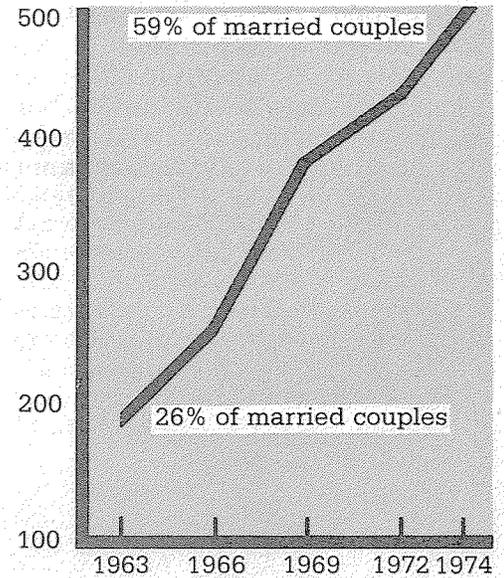
Inflation also works a hardship on those with fixed incomes, especially the elderly. Since women comprise a majority of this age group, women are particularly vulnerable to the low relative income that is associated with a rapidly rising cost of living.

Many families combat the effects of inflation by becoming two-earner families. In fact, that kind of family has now become the norm. In 1963, only a quarter of husband-wife families in Minnesota had two incomes. Eleven years later, in 1974, 59 percent of husband-wife families had two incomes.

For many, this second income is the only means by which they stay above the poverty level. But for single-parent families and for elderly women alone, this choice is not possible.

**Dramatic rise in two-earner families**

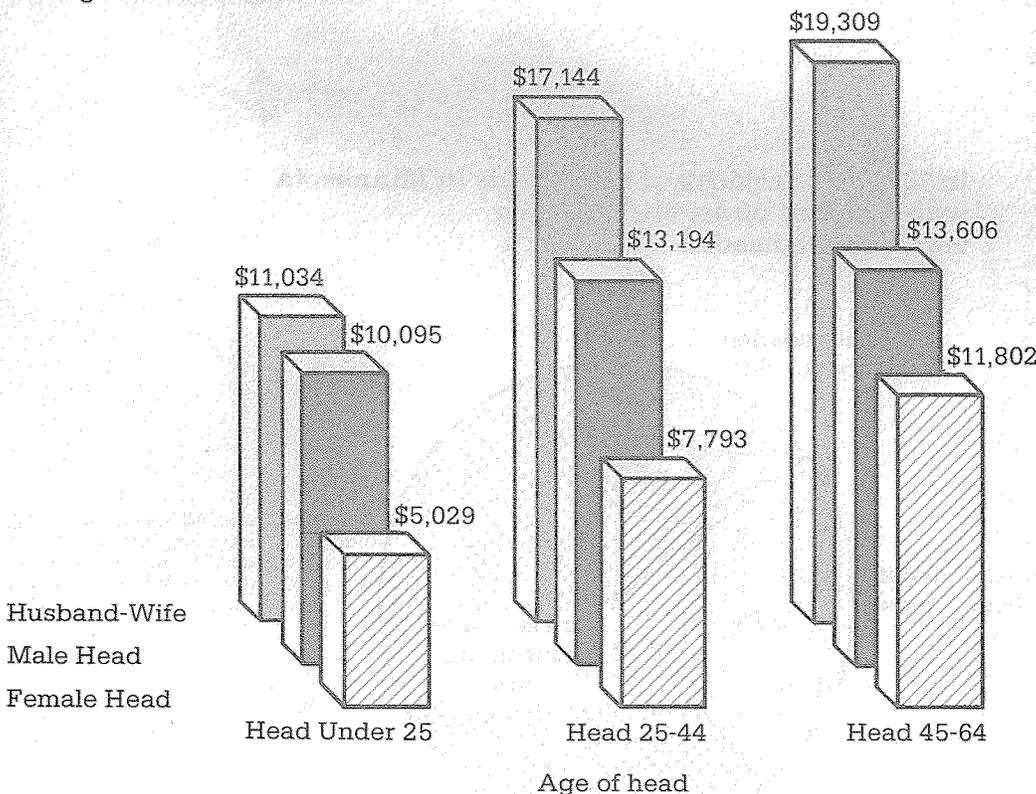
Married couples, both spouses with earnings, filing Minnesota tax returns (in thousands)



Source: Minnesota Dept. of Revenue

**For all age groups, husband-wife families in Minnesota have the highest incomes**

Average annual income in 1974



Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census (estimated)

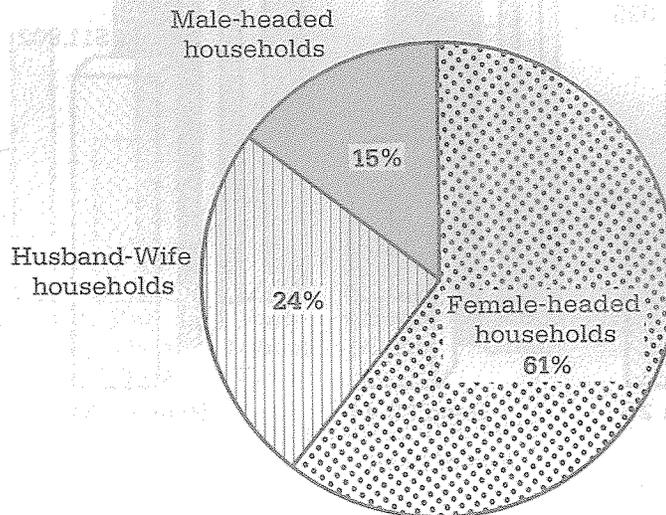
The results of all these trends have brought dramatic shifts to the composition of the poverty population. As more and more families have come to have two incomes, the number of husband-wife families in poverty has dropped sharply. Between 1960 and 1974 there was a decrease of 56 percent in the number of male-headed and husband-wife families in poverty has dropped sharply. At the same

time, there have been increases in the number of female-headed families in poverty, particularly among those with dependent children. The following chart shows the change in poverty status of U.S. families between 1960 and 1974:

Male-headed & husband-wife	-56%
Male-headed & husband-wife with dependent children	-55%
Female-headed	+20%
Female headed with dependent children	+46%

In absolute terms, the number of female-headed households in poverty is now a substantial majority of all households which are poor. No longer is poverty distributed throughout the population, but rather it has become a characteristic associated with women — women alone in old age and widowhood, women alone in mid-life with no job or prospects for one, and women alone struggling to support children in a society which never taught her to support herself.

In 1975, the majority of households in Minnesota with incomes under \$5,000 a year were female-headed



Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census (estimated)

## WOMEN'S VOICES\*

"He walked out on me. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know anything. But people expected me to go right on being calm, being sensible, taking care of the kids. What did they know about my pain — my fear — my loss of identity as my husband's wife, as part of our family..."



"I was told that if I was a 'good girl' and took care of myself, some nice guy would come along, fall in love, marry me, and take care of me for the rest of my life. I believed that — I actually believed that — and here I am at 37 with three small kids — left alone. My divorce settlement is going to leave hardly anything to live on. The judge asked me at my pre-trial hearing why I wasn't looking for a job. I married at 20 without finishing college. I have no training — I have no money to go back to school. The jobs I might even be able to get don't pay anything! Who is going to look after my children if I do work? I don't know what I am going to do."



"We are now at a point where all the years of surviving on practically nothing are over and we could have a nice life together with the protection of social security, pension plans, company benefits, etc. So now is the time he decides to start being a playboy, and so what to the wife who went through all the hard times with him.. I have worked full-time myself... I have worked helping him... I have worked in the house. It wasn't always fascinating for me, but I did it without complaint thinking this was helping our future together."

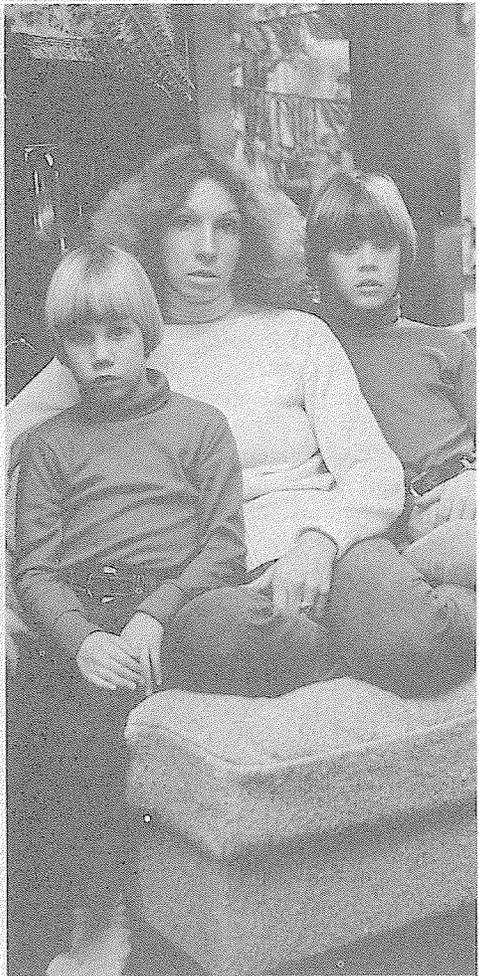
"I'm 49 years old... my ex-husband's income is \$5,000 a month... my alimony has stopped, placing me below the poverty level... I'm now living on welfare... I can't find an apartment I can pay for... I have been evicted from the one I was living in... four men came to my apartment one morning and took all my furniture and all of my clothes with the exception of what I could quickly grab and throw into my handbag and one other bag and carry out. My things are in storage... I am living in emergency housing... I am waiting to see if my application has been approved so I can secure an apartment and somehow attend continuing education classes with a grant from some state or federal office. Otherwise I will be a 'destroyed person' without any future."



"I thought, foolishly, that we owned things jointly. I didn't realize that was not the case and almost nothing was in my name. The small savings account I had opened at my husband's insistence when I went to work part-time was all used up by lawyers' fees. My husband is remarried and his second wife has a standard of living I never enjoyed. I have lost the status I did have. But it is looking for work when you haven't worked for years that is the hardest. I will make it now, but at first my whole world fell apart."

\*Sections called "Women's Voices" are taken from testimony presented to the Council on the Economic Status of Women at public hearings. For places and dates of hearings, see inside back cover.

# SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES



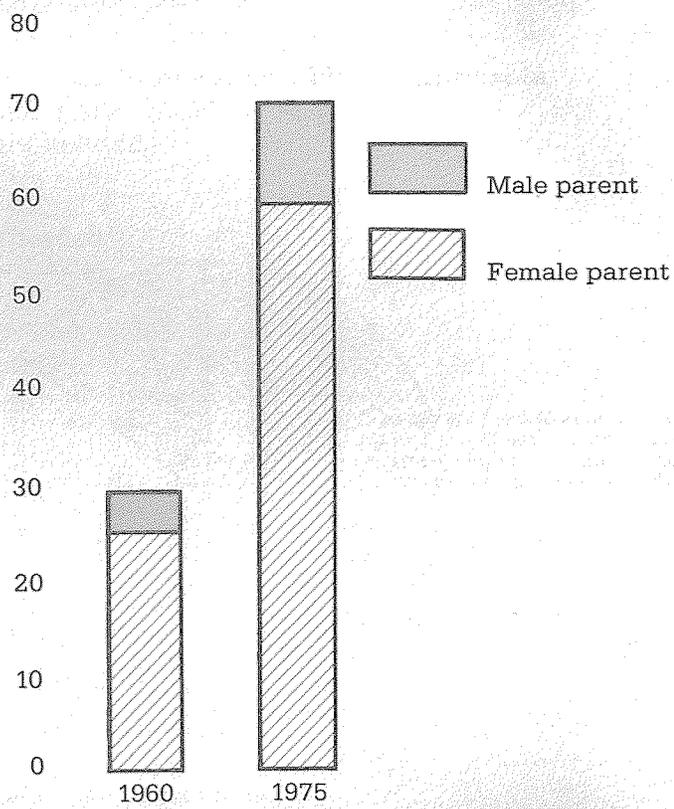
Single-parent families are not a new phenomenon. In the past, many marriages broke up through death or desertion leaving widows with even larger families to support than is true for most present-day women. In the 19th century such families, despite "poor law" approaches to help them, mainly muddled along with the help of relatives, friends, and the children themselves; there were no broad-scale national or state policies or programs to try to alleviate their misery. Exact comparisons of numbers of single-parent families are probably not possible since there were no well kept records of single-parent families until relatively recently; it may be that a portion of the reported increase is simply due to better record keeping.

For the present, however, the number of households headed by single parents is large and growing. And while these increases in single parenthood have occurred for both men and women, by far the greatest number of single-parent families are headed by women. In addition, the greatest increases in female family headship have occurred among the youngest women, those most likely to have young and dependent children.

Black women are even more likely to spend long periods of time as single parents. A national study has shown that blacks have longer separations before divorce than do whites, have lower remarriage rates after divorce, and have longer periods of time between divorce and remarriage.

**Dramatic 15-year increase in Minnesota single-parent families with children under age 18**

Number of families (in thousands)



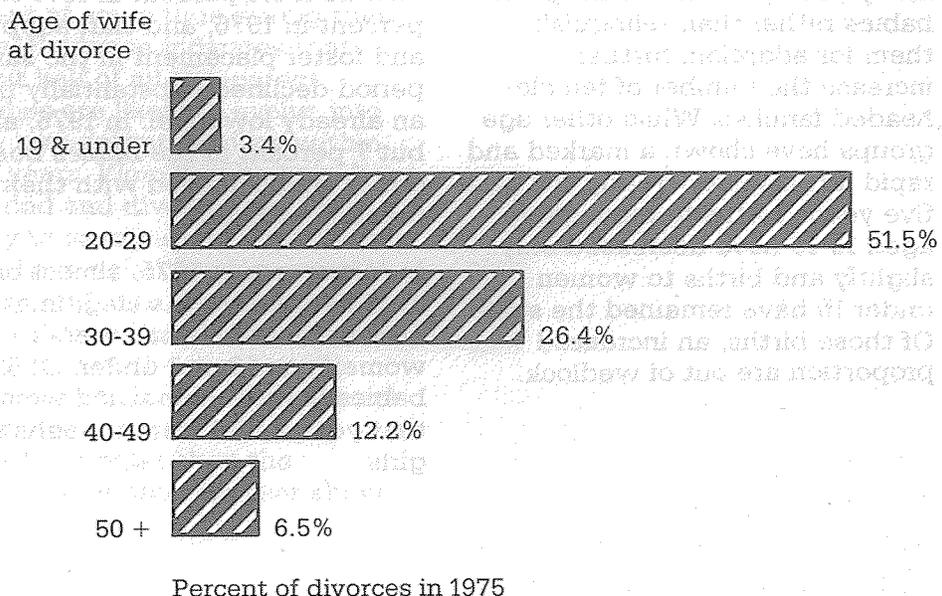
Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census

The most important factor in this shift in family structure is the rising divorce rate, which doubled nationally in the past decade. There were more than one million divorces in the U.S. last year, with many additional family dissolutions through separation and desertion.

Minnesota has not escaped this national trend. In 1950, the ratio of marriages to divorces was 7 to 1. In 1975, this ratio was less than 3 to 1, and the state recorded 13,187 marriage dissolutions in that year.

Most divorces take place before the wife is age 30. In Minnesota in 1975, over half the divorces took place among women age 29 and younger, and another quarter of the divorces were to women who were in their thirties. Although divorces when the wife is relatively young may provide better opportunities for a new start in life, it also increases the likelihood that the economic dislocations of divorce will involve young children.

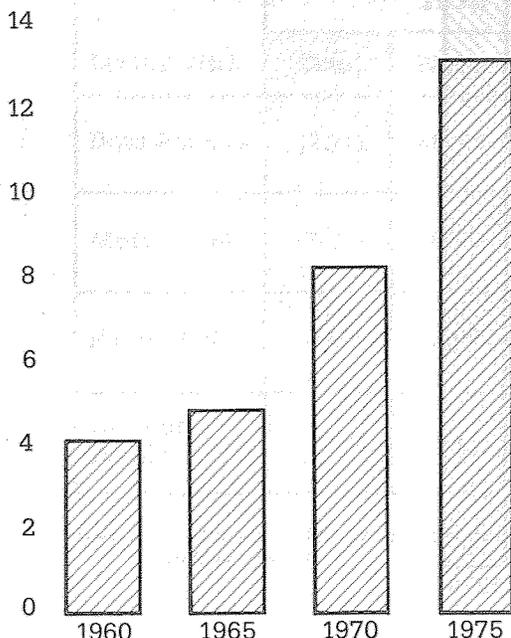
### Most divorces in Minnesota take place before the wife is age 30



Source: Minnesota Board of Health

### Number of divorces in Minnesota has increased sharply

Number of divorces (in thousands)



Source: Minnesota Board of Health

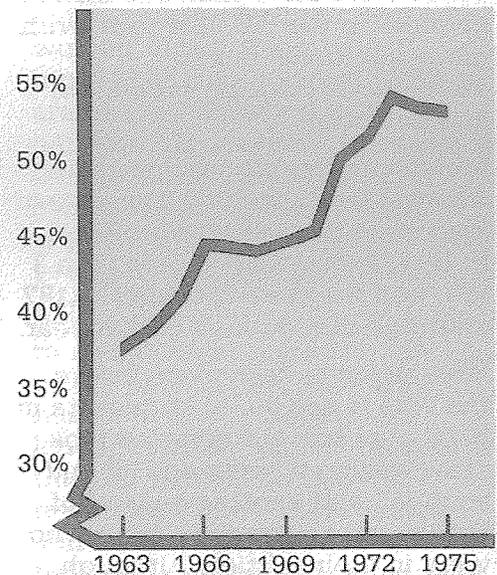
Rising illegitimacy rates among teenagers, combined with a shift in social attitudes which lead many young women to keep their babies rather than relinquish them for adoption, further increase the number of female-headed families. While other age groups have shown a marked and rapid fertility drop during the past five years, births to teenagers aged 15-19 have decreased only slightly and births to women under 15 have remained the same. Of these births, an increased proportion are out of wedlock.

A national survey shows that the percentage of white teenagers having a premarital pregnancy rose from 6.4 percent in 1971 to 9.3 percent in 1976, and that adoption and foster placement in the same period declined substantially from an already low level. In 1976, all but 7 percent of the babies born out of wedlock lived with their teenage mothers.

In Minnesota in 1975, almost one of 10 live births was illegitimate, and of these over half were to women age 19 and under. Of 5,192 babies born to unmarried women that year, 2,778 were to teenage girls.

### More than half of all illegitimate births are to teenagers

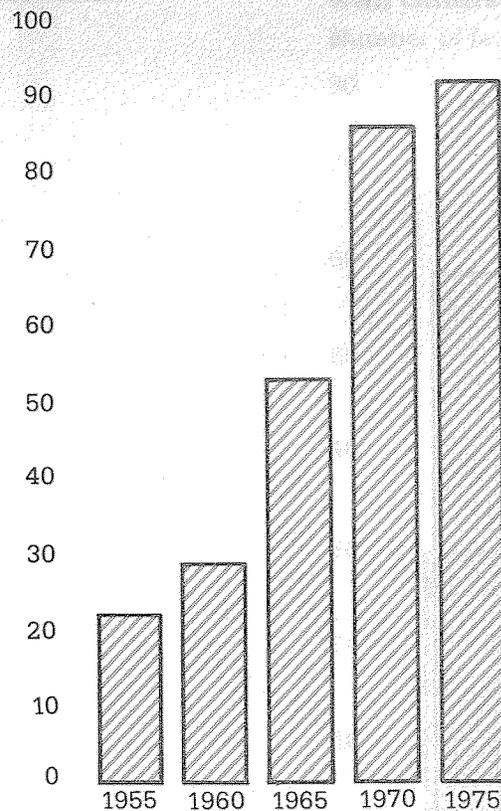
Percent of illegitimate births to teenage mothers



Source: Minnesota Board of Health

### Illegitimate births in Minnesota rising

Number of illegitimate births per 1,000 live births



Source: Minnesota Board of Health

The rise in single-parent families has been accompanied by corresponding increases in the number of children who live in households other than those headed by two parents. In Minnesota in 1975, it is estimated that 162,000 children lived in single-parent households — of these, 143,000 lived with the mother only and 19,000 lived with the father only. An additional 27,000 children lived with neither parent.

Even fewer minority race children live with two parents. In 1975, it is estimated that less than half of minority race children lived in two-parent families in Minnesota.

In a sense these statistics do not reflect the total number of children who live with only one parent at some time during their lives. Evidence indicates that about half of all one-parent families are likely to evolve into new two-parent families within five years. Women who have been married and divorced are more likely to marry again than women who have never been married. Living with one parent, then, is often a transitional stage for many children; but the number of children who live in a one-parent family for some of their early years is vastly greater than the statistics for any one year show.

**The percent of children living with both parents has declined in Minnesota**

Living With	1970			1975		
	Total	White	Minority	Total	White	Minority
Both Parents	89.7%	90.4%	58.4%	84.8%	86.5%	49.7%
Mother Only	7.3%	6.9%	29.7%	10.6%	10.1%	40.2%
Father Only	1.0%	0.9%	2.1%	1.4%	1.4%	3.0%
Neither Parent	2.0%	1.8%	9.8%	1.6%	1.4%	7.4%

Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census, *Editorial Research Reports* (1975 estimated)

In no area of women's concerns are myths more pervasive or judgments more harsh than in divorce, alimony, and child support. "Marriage is a women's business," stated one domestic relations judge in a study conducted by the American Bar Association. "When the marriage is bankrupt, the woman is bankrupt."

Although comprehensive data are not available, all indications are that the economic dislocations of divorce fall most severely on women and their children. The belief that greedy wives wipe out husbands financially in the divorce court simply does not hold up under the available evidence.

Three national studies give some indication of the economic consequences of divorce. In a survey of 1,522 divorced American women conducted in 1975, only 14 percent were awarded alimony after divorce and of this 14 percent less than half were collecting regularly. Only 44 percent of the divorced mothers were awarded child support, and again of these less than half were collecting regularly.

In a longitudinal study conducted by the University of Michigan, 5,000 families were tracked over 7 years, during which time 500 underwent divorce. It was found that if the women had to rely solely on alimony and child support for income, only 3 percent would be above the poverty level. Of women eligible to receive payments from fathers of their children, 40 percent never received a single payment. Child support and alimony actually paid amounted to about 12 percent of the husband's earnings at the time of divorce or separation.

In a study from the University of Wisconsin conducted in the 1950s, it was found that within one year of divorce, 4 of 10 fathers were not paying any child support. After 10 years, 8 of 10 made no support payments.

Other studies have shown that non-support is as prevalent among affluent and middle-class fathers as among low-income men, and there is little relationship between ability to pay and actual payment. The Michigan study reported that the financial status of husbands improved following divorce whereas the situation of the wife deteriorated.

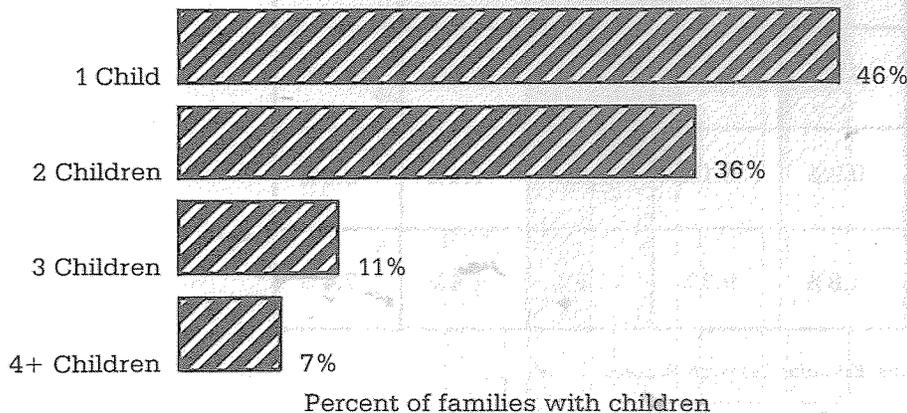
In the summer of 1977, the Council on the Economic Status of Women undertook a study of divorce records in Hennepin County. Research was completed on a total of 353 cases from the months of June 1976 and January 1977.

This included a random sample of 300 cases, about half of which involved minor children. Data was then gathered on 53 additional cases involving dependent children to make a total of 200 cases in which there were children.

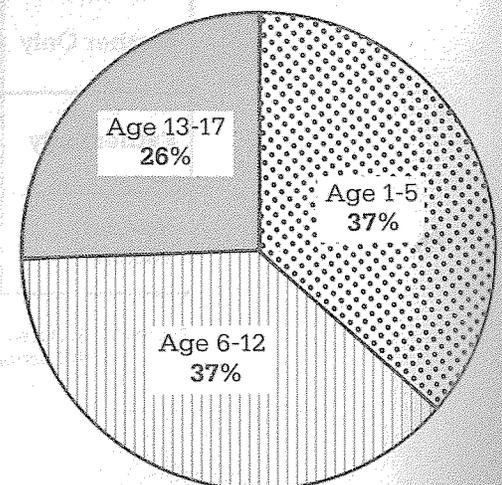
Findings from the study showed that most of the women were married at a young age. Thirty-eight percent were married by age 20, and 80 percent by age 25. One-third of the women were divorced by age 25, but the highest percentage of divorces came between the ages of 25 and 35. Fifty-three percent of the women were divorced within this ten-year span in their lives.

The length of the marriages varied greatly, some lasting over 40 years and others lasting only a few months. About half (49%) of the marriages lasted 5 years or less, and nearly three-fourths (73%) lasted less than 11 years.

Hennepin County study shows number of children ...



... and ages of children in divorced families



Source: Council on The Economic Status of Women

In the sample with dependent children, over half the divorces occurred in families with more than one child. Categorizing them according to school age, 37 percent were pre-school children, 37 percent in elementary school, and 26 percent in junior high and senior high school.

As might be expected, the Hennepin County study showed that custody of the children was granted to the mother in 90 percent of the cases, the husband got custody 8 percent of the time, and joint custody was granted in less than 3 of 100 cases. In cases where the mother was the custodial parent, 20 percent of the time the father was not required to pay any child support. Of the husbands not assigned child support, about 30 percent were unemployed and 14 percent were making \$300 or less per month. However, more than half of those not assigned child support made over \$300 per month.

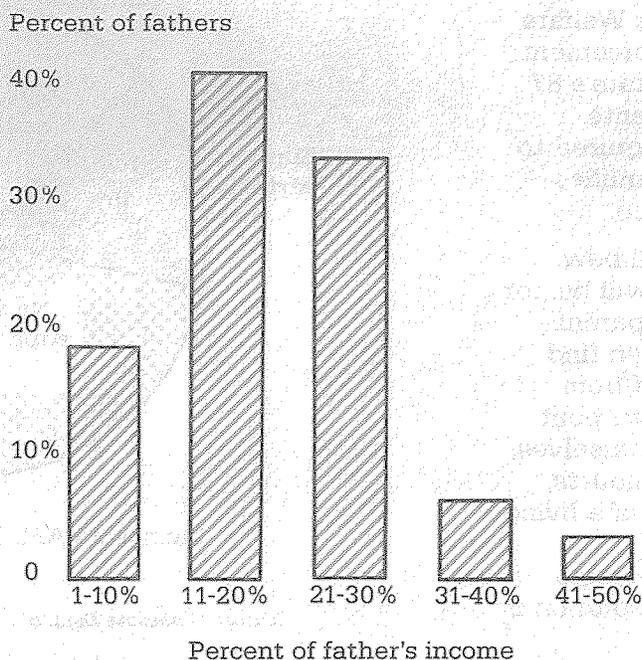
Information on family income was difficult to compile because data varied considerably from case to case. There was no typical case and in this study 45 percent of the fathers who were assigned child support did not have their incomes listed. Of those whose income was recorded, the average amount paid in child support was 19 percent of the father's income, with a range from 2 percent to 48 percent. In no case did the child support allotment exceed half the father's income.

Although medical and sometimes life insurance is provided for many children in a husband-wife family through the father's employment, in fully one-half the cases involving minor children no mention was made of insurance provisions. In 36 percent of the

cases, both medical and life insurance were provided, while 10 percent provided medical insurance only, and 4 percent provided life insurance only.

Only 11 percent of the women were granted alimony. Most of these women were married longer than others in the sample. Their average length of married life was 17 years. About 45 percent of them received permanent alimony, and most of these (85%) received less than \$400 per month. Another 45 percent received semi-permanent alimony and these payments usually lasted 2 to 5 years. The rest received a lump sum settlement ranging from \$125 to \$1,100.

**Majority of fathers in Hennepin County are assigned less than 20% of their income as child support**



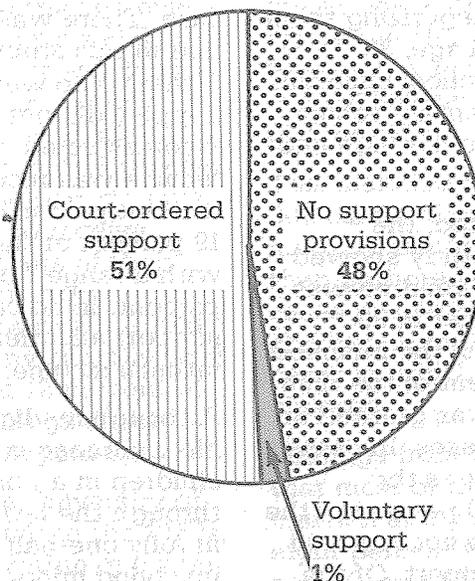
Source: Council on The Economic Status of Women

While no data from the Hennepin County study was available on the collection of alimony and child support, personal testimony given in Council hearings suggests that in Minnesota, as nationally, most husbands and fathers neglect their financial obligations once they leave the household. Witness after witness described the difficulties in trying to get awards enforced, and many indicated that the cost of legal fees made any attempt at enforcement impossible. One woman characterized her efforts to collect child support as "in effect going through a new divorce each time."

In January 1975, Title IV-D was added to the federal Social Security Act in an attempt to insure that all parents having the ability to support their children do so. This act set up a child support enforcement agency within the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and required that each state set up a special agency within state government to carry out the law's mandate. In Minnesota, the State Office of Child Support Enforcement is in the Department of Public Welfare with a child support enforcement program in each of the state's 87 county welfare departments. Families on AFDC are required to use this service; other families may use it by paying a fee.

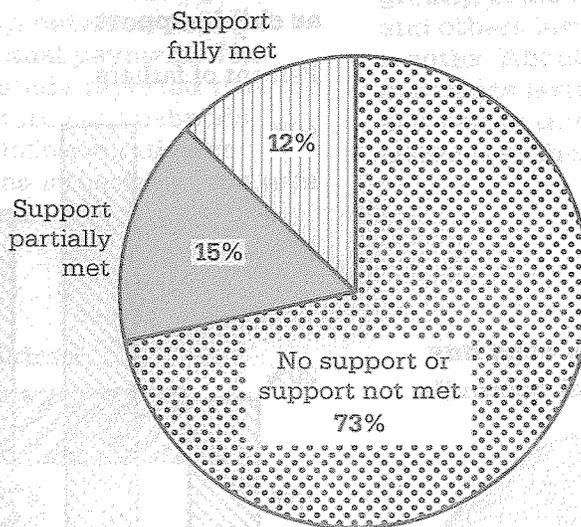
While it is too soon to tell how successful the program will be, for the present most single parent families headed by women find themselves adrift, cut off from their source of support, without the means to support themselves, with little help from the courts, and little or no prospect of a living wage. Welfare, however repugnant to the female single parent, may be her only solution if she finds she is truly unemployable or until she finds adequate, affordable child care, or until her children are old enough to be self-sufficient.

**About half the children in AFDC families have no support provision ...**



Minnesota AFDC children, May 1975

**... and almost three quarters of the AFDC children collect no support**



Minnesota AFDC children, May 1975

Source: Minnesota Dept. of Public Welfare

## WOMEN'S VOICES

"The judge doesn't understand that a 7-year-old cannot get himself breakfast and off to school every day. My work for the past 18 years has been making a home; that work isn't done yet. Children who have lost one parent are now being required to lose both."



"I am 34 years old. I have been divorced seven years — with two teenage daughters. When I was divorced, I was working full-time, making \$5,164 a year. My husband was unemployed, having had six jobs during that year. A Dakota County judge awarded me \$100 a month in child support for the two children. I received that child support only for a few months... then for many months, nothing. I was borrowing \$100 per month from my parents just so the children and I could survive. Supplemental welfare benefits were refused me... they said my wages were too high. My wages that year were \$5,540."

"My husband had remarried, had a full-time job, his wife had a full-time job and one child by a previous marriage. I borrowed money from my father to hire an attorney and take my husband back to court. He was ordered to pay me \$80 per month in child support until he had paid off the \$1,200 he owed me. When that sum was paid off, the child support payments were to be lowered to \$60 per month. Many times I have wanted to try to increase the child support payments, but I have never attempted to go back to court. I can't afford an attorney, and the last thing I want is another emotional battle with my ex-husband. And what in the world makes me think I would even have a chance to increase the child support? The judge would probably lower the child support by another \$40 per month."



"I had been making the house payments myself for one year when I was divorced, but the bank needed my father's signature on the papers so they would continue the mortgage."

"... marriage is usually considered a 'sacred rite' when in reality it is an 'economic entente' which is often broken. Most women don't realize that."



"I have been married 19 years — not the magic 20 — I have five dependent children. I want to go to work... I'm healthy, I'm an independent person. Twenty years ago I had a profession, but it is not what I want to do now. I want to go back to school. My husband (a physician) has categorically stated that he will not finance my education unless he is ordered to by the courts. A married spouse who has not worked for years is a dependent, and it is not a comfortable place to be."

# WELFARE

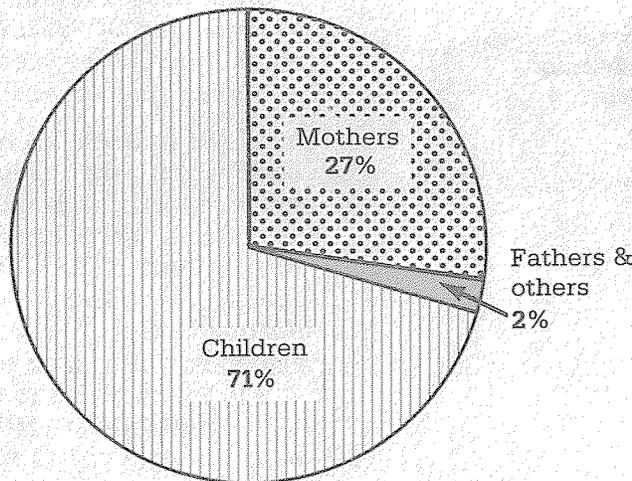


With the increase in divorce and the measurable shift to one-parent families, many women are caught between the old order and the new — finding their moorings within marriage gone but unable to support themselves and their children. For such women, public assistance may be their only hope for survival.

Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) was originally established as a program to “encourage care of dependent children in their own homes,” to “help maintain and strengthen family life,” and to provide children with “continuing parental care and protection.” In short, the program was designed to encourage and support families in the home care of their children.

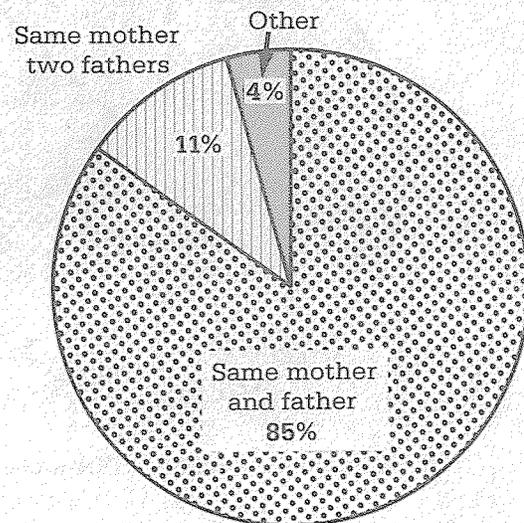
Somehow, in the years since the establishment of the program, a wholly different mythology of welfare mothers has developed. “Lazy,” “undeserving,” and “promiscuous” are part of the stereotype, as well as the image of women living in luxury and idleness at the taxpayers’ expense. Unlike other groups who receive some form of public assistance — veterans with their GI benefits or corporations with their tax incentives — the welfare mother is viewed with suspicion and is accorded little dignity.

**Almost 3/4 of AFDC recipients are children**



Minnesota AFDC recipients, May 1975

**AFDC children in a family most likely have the same mother and father**



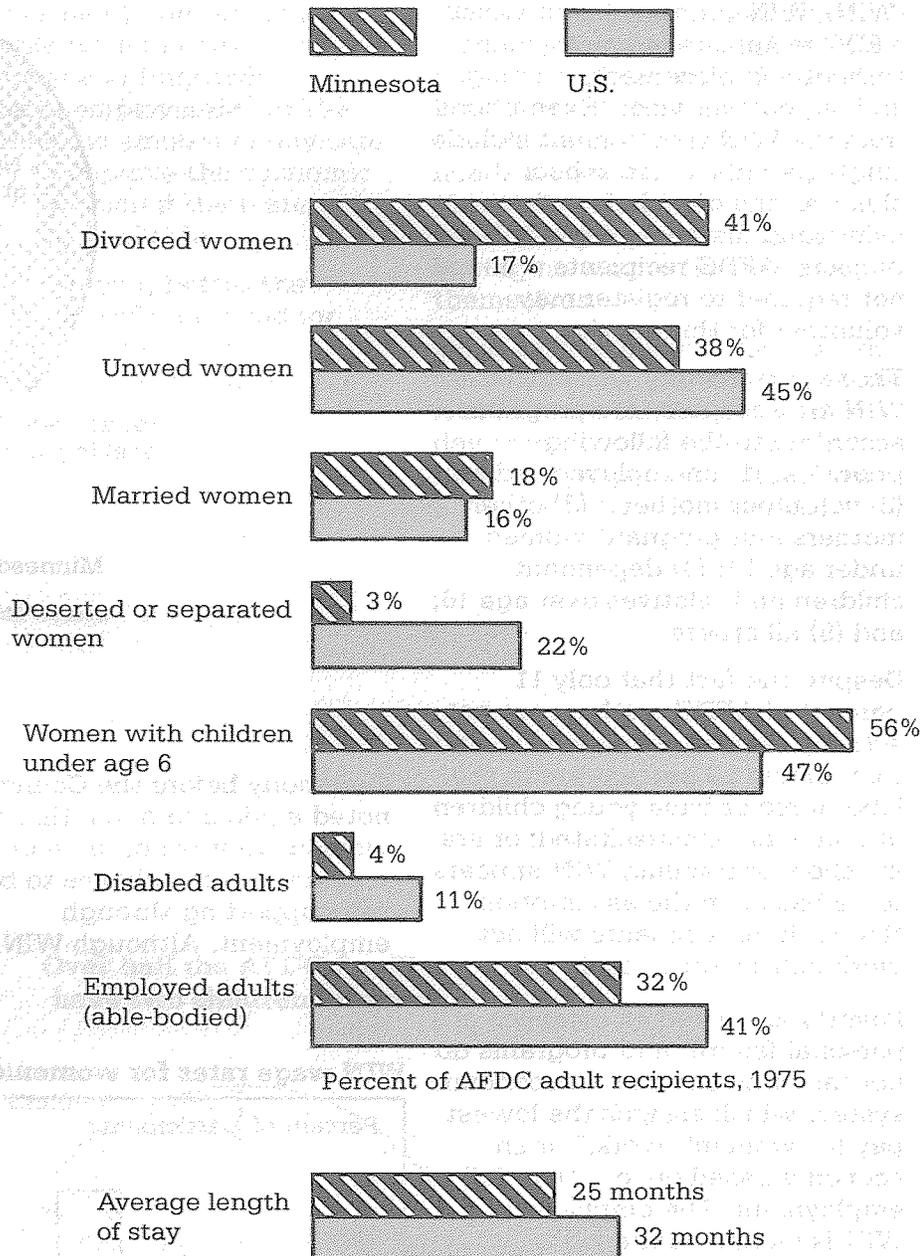
Minnesota AFDC children, May 1975

Source: Minnesota Dept. of Public Welfare

An estimated 38,000 women and 90,000 children in Minnesota rely on Aid to Families with Dependent Children. In order to qualify for this program a woman must have dependent children under age 18, or age 19 if in school full-time, or she must be in the last three months of pregnancy. Eligibility requires a net income after taxes and work expenses that is less than the payment standard, equity in a home of less than \$15,000, and less than \$500 worth of personal property for a family of three or more. Household goods, income-producing tools and materials, and a car for work are disregarded.

The payment on this program is a flat cash grant, depending on the size of the family, and recipients are automatically eligible for Medicaid, food stamps, and Title XX social services. The grant for a family of three — single parent and two children — on AFDC in Minnesota in 1977 was \$330 a month, or \$3960 a year. In addition, the family may receive an average of \$42 per month in food stamps, \$40 per month for school lunches, \$133 per month in Medicaid, and \$112 per month in rent subsidy, for an additional \$327 per month. The yearly income, without Medicaid, is therefore \$6288 per year; with Medicaid, \$7884 per year. If a parent is receiving financial aids for attending school, the scholarship amount and educational expenses are deducted from the basic grant.

### Comparisons of U.S. and Minnesota AFDC recipients show some differences



Source: Citizen's League

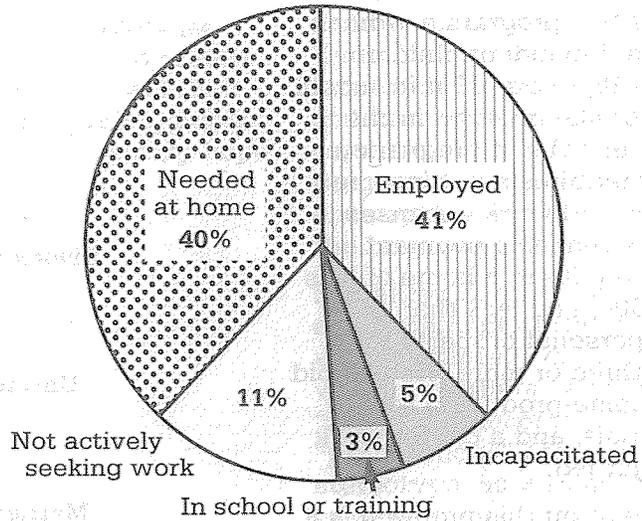
Under the AFDC program, a single parent whose youngest child is at least 6 years old must register for the Work Incentive program (WIN). WIN's function is to assist AFDC recipients in employment through job placement, training, and support services. Exemptions from the WIN requirement include single parents of pre-school children, the disabled, or those living long distances from WIN projects. AFDC recipients who are not required to register may volunteer for this service.

Those persons who do register for WIN are accepted into programs according to the following priorities: (1) unemployed fathers; (2) volunteer mothers; (3) other mothers and pregnant women under age 19; (4) dependent children and relatives over age 16; and (5) all others.

Despite the fact that only 11 percent of AFDC mothers are not actively seeking employment, and that almost 90 percent are in the labor force or have young children at home, are incapacitated, or are in school or training, WIN appears to be based on the assumption that welfare recipients will not work unless forced to do so.

Poverty is viewed as evidence of personal failure; and programs do not take into account an economic system which assigns the lowest pay to "women's work," or an economy based on less than full employment. The emphasis of WIN is on immediate job placement, which for women means placement in low-income, dead-end jobs usually insufficient to provide even minimal support for a family. In 1975, the average earned income of AFDC recipients in Minnesota was \$4800 per year.

**Most AFDC mothers are employed or needed at home.**



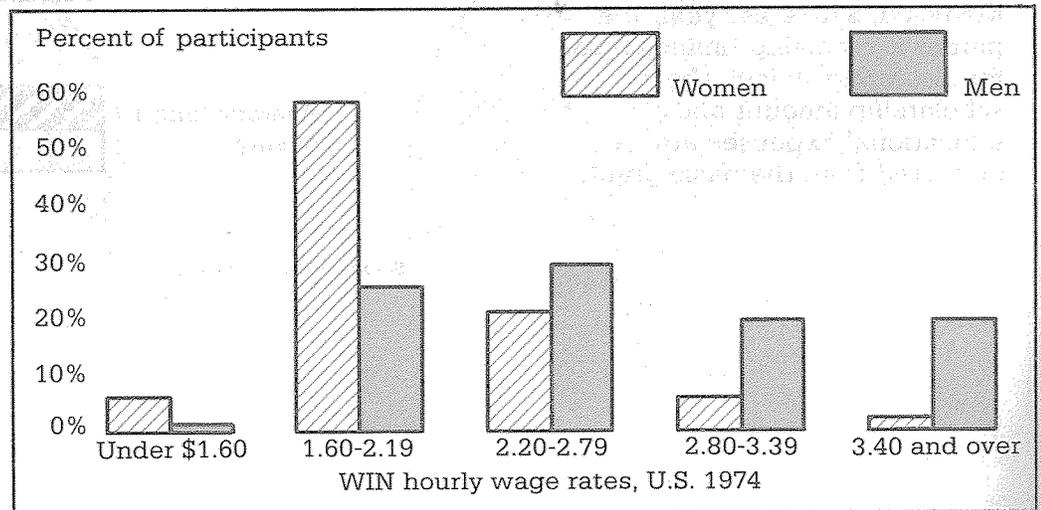
Minnesota AFDC mothers, May 1975

Source: Minnesota Dept. of Public Welfare

Testimony before the Council noted again and again that what women want is not more or better welfare, but the chance to become self-supporting through employment. Although WIN in

theory should meet this need, in practice it does not provide the kinds of jobs or enough economic independence to either lift women out of poverty or to free them from the welfare system.

**WIN wage rates for women cluster at low end of scale**



Source: U.S. Dept. of Labor; U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare

By definition, the AFDC adult recipient is responsible for the care of young children. Until the mid-1960s, public policy encouraged AFDC mothers with small children to stay at home. However, as attitudes toward women working modified, and as taxpayers increasingly felt the pinch of the growing welfare bill, there was a gradual change in attitudes about child care for welfare mothers. Child care began to be viewed as a means of giving women the choice of employment outside the home and, perhaps even more important, as a means of getting them off welfare.

In the past, older adult relatives living in the family home could be turned to where there was a need to share parenting tasks, but with the virtual extinction of the traditional "extended" family, the numbers of such persons has diminished. Child care has thus moved from family care to parent care, which is now increasingly one-parent care.

This one parent is frequently the mother who is also burdened with the need to support her family. To go to work with an easy mind, she must arrange care for her children which will meet both her needs and theirs. She does not have an easy task.

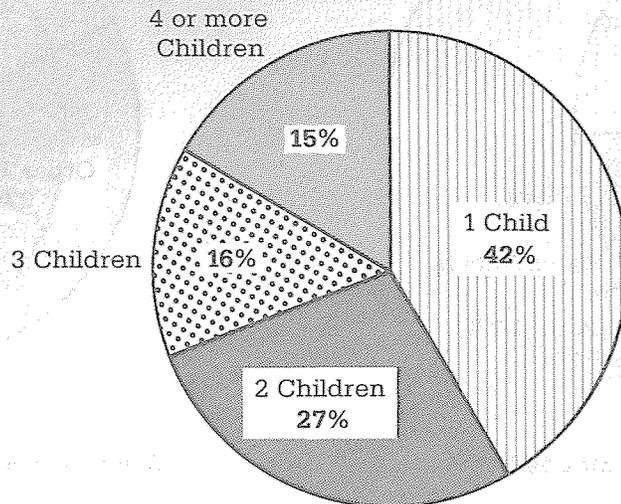
Day care facilities, after-school programs, or subsidization of informal child care arrangements in the family home, which most mothers seem to prefer, might help some women engage in more continuous and financially productive employment. At the same time, no amount of day care is likely to improve the economic status of women if there are no decent jobs available.

Women testifying before the Council spoke of their need for work schedule flexibility — part-time jobs, shared jobs,

flexitime arrangements — to give them more hours with their families. Some acknowledged that they often feel overwhelmed with the responsibility of parenting alone — of decision making and discipline, of having no help with household chores, of having no one else to help meet children's needs for attention, affection, or parental participation in their lives. Many women spoke of having no way to find time for themselves.

Child care problems obviously do not end once a suitable baby sitter is found or a child is enrolled in day care. If children are to be cared for properly, mothers need a variety of support services.

Over half the AFDC families have two children or more



Minnesota AFDC family size, May 1975

Source: Minnesota Dept. of Public Welfare

Testimony before the Council by AFDC recipients repeatedly described the frustrations and humiliations encountered in the welfare system. Staff, they said, tended to be less than adequate and helpful. Sometimes the applicant was asked for personal information well beyond that required for a determination of level of need. The applicant often had to wait several hours before being seen by a staff member and then sometimes found that further information and documentation were necessary — rent receipts, for example — requiring the applicant to return and go through the entire process again.

One woman testified that she made three visits to the welfare department without ever being able to make clear her needs to officials, and that she was finally reduced to tears in her efforts to

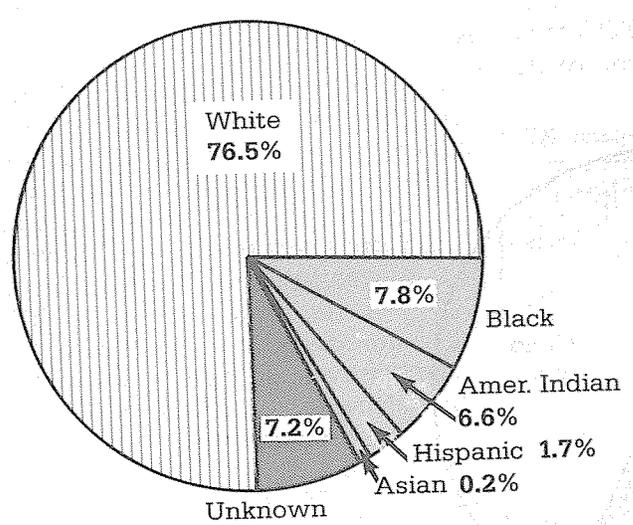
get someone to understand her situation. She reported she never did receive the help she needed.

That a feeling of powerlessness and an inability or reluctance to fight often affect women in dealing with welfare agencies was substantiated by comments made to the Council by many witnesses. One spoke of the acceptance on the part of welfare workers of a "mythology of welfare mothers" which causes them to act as if the woman's poverty, her being on welfare, is always her own responsibility — a "blame the victim" attitude.

Another testified that she felt she had been treated as if she were a "loafer who had nothing to do but fill out forms." Still another testified that even when women do struggle with welfare departments to receive and maintain their benefits, their lives are in turmoil, and sometimes they reach the point where "they can't fight anymore."

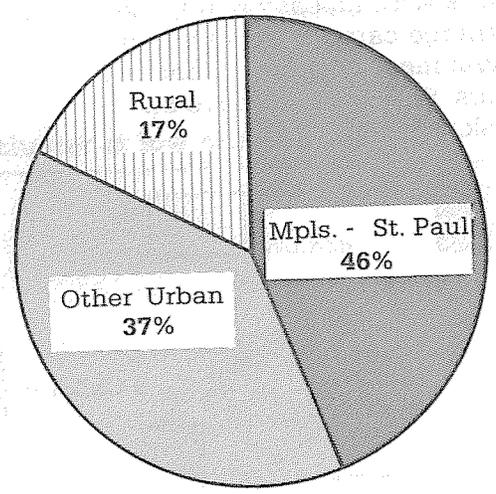
Testimony was also given on the difficulties of women in rural areas. One woman spoke of a number of AFDC recipients who had left rural Minnesota because they could not cope with the treatment they got from neighbors and the administrative service. "In order to get immediate help in the cities," one witness stated, "they use addresses of relatives." She suggested that rural communities be educated to accept their own problems and to treat women with dependent children with dignity.

Over 3/4 of AFDC families are white...



Race of Minnesota AFDC families, May 1975

...and most live in urban areas



Residence of Minnesota AFDC families, May 1975

Source: Minnesota Dept. of Public Welfare

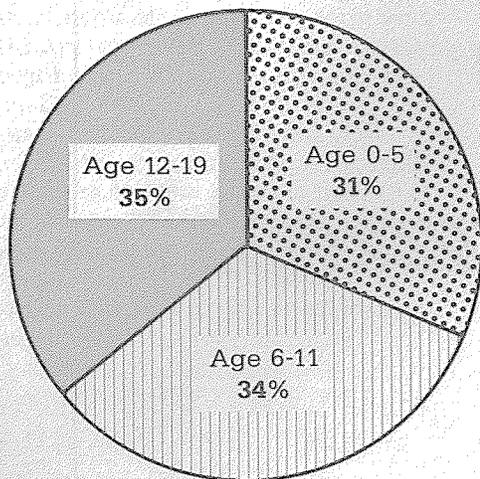
It is not only their own fears, lack of confidence, and ignorance about the types of income support programs that pose problems for women. Two other major obstacles are that various welfare offices are housed in separate locations requiring visits to several places and that the forms for aid are numerous and complex. Many women testifying before the Council told of applying for welfare at a particularly traumatic time in their lives, and clearly felt it would have helped to make a

single visit to a single office, and to be given clear-cut and understandable criteria in order to determine their eligibility for assistance. For women with babies or young children, it was especially difficult and inconvenient to make the rounds to several offices, particularly when long waits were involved. The problems are further aggravated when the applicant speaks limited English, is

functionally illiterate, or has need for emergency assistance and is unaware that this is available.

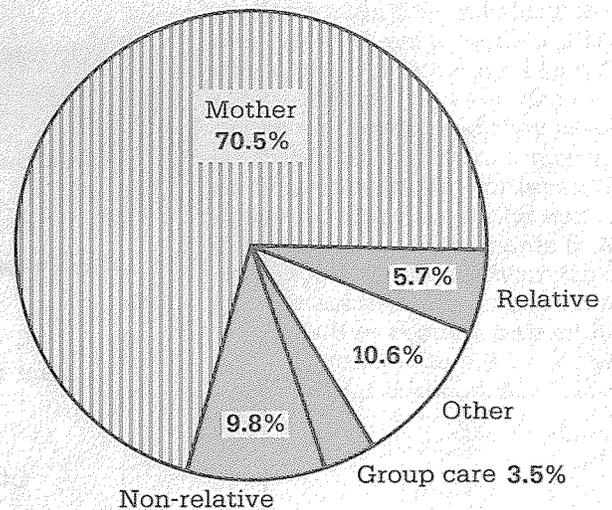
Long delays in receiving help was also mentioned frequently. One woman on the Work Incentive Program reported that "my child provider had to wait three months for payment, and I didn't get my first transportation money for two and a half months." Other women cited long, and for them, desperate weeks of waiting to receive their checks.

Median age of AFDC children is 8.7 years...



Minnesota AFDC children, May 1975

...and most are cared for by their mother



Child care for AFDC children, May 1975

Source: Minnesota Dept. of Public Welfare

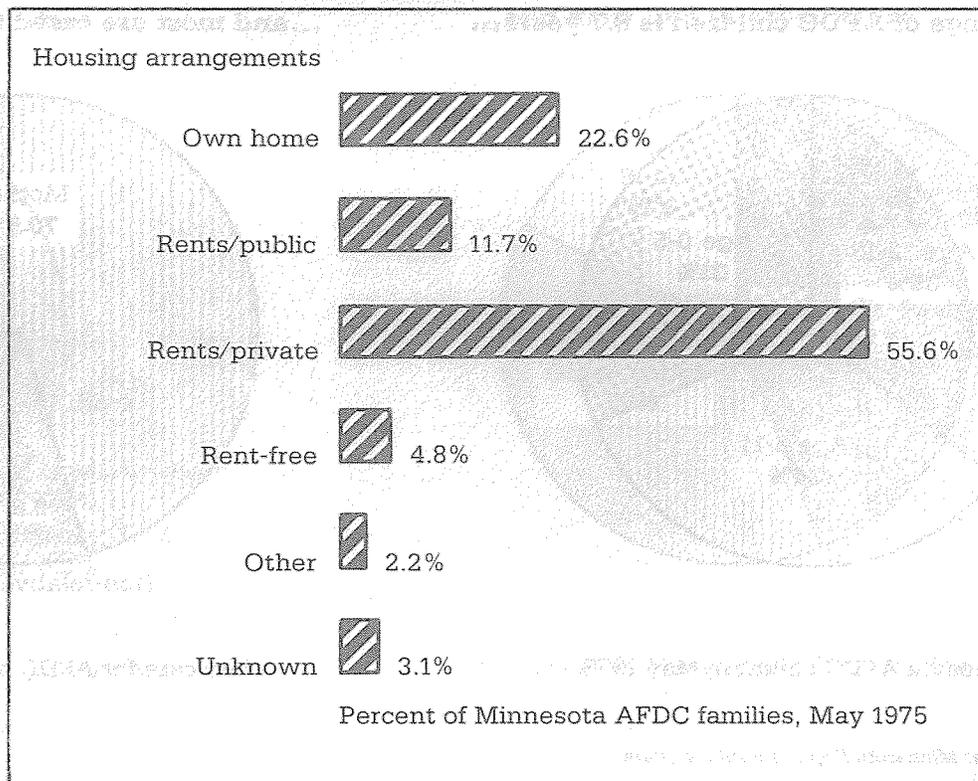
Among the bitterest comments heard by the Council were those that had to do with housing. One woman advised, "Stay out of public housing. Once there, you never get out. You're psychologically overcome. There is a whole aura of helplessness and hopelessness. Everyone there is sure they can't get out." Another stated, "Project homes are really skid row — there is high crime, fear, and paranoia. No, stay out of there if you ever plan to do something with your life.."

Subsidized housing got a somewhat better mark, but there were difficulties there, too. Although women reported that such housing starts out well, with a variety of people living in the units, the same defeatist attitude characteristic of public housing residents ultimately sets in because the building gradually fills up with AFDC and low-income women struggling to survive.

Those seeking housing outside of government financing also have problems. "They don't want you if you're a woman," one woman declared. "If you are single they figure you'll have boyfriends and parties. If you're a mother, especially if you're a working mother, then you'll have babysitters and latchkey kids. There's no way they want you either way."

Many women described the lack of maintenance, threats of eviction or other forms of reprisal for trying to get the landlord to make repairs, failure of Inspection Departments to crack down on code violations, and lack of legal and judicial backup for complaints. Women also mentioned evictions they thought unjust and the many instances when forced to move — sometimes as often as four or more times in one year — the penalties enacted for having children, the disruptions in their children's lives and schooling, the lack of even minimal security in the buildings, and the "harrassment and intimidation" they faced because they are low-income people and because they have children.

### Most AFDC families are renters



Source: Minnesota Dept. of Public Welfare

## WOMEN'S VOICES

"I had to go to three different places before I could get the information I needed. One place I had to go back twice. I thought I was going to go broke paying bus fare. Why can't the whole welfare set-up be in the same spot?"



"All these forms really bother me — the 'we'll cut you off' threatening letters if you don't get them in really bothers me. I lead a busy, involved life. I'm a good full-time parent with three schools to visit, a part-time job, and a 16-credit class load to study for and classes to attend. The reduplication and complexity of financial reporting is a college course in itself — far more complex than budgeting the little I get, paying my bills, and keeping my checkbook out of the red.

"This month my best friend died. I helped with calling and supporting other friends. . . I did not immediately get the twenty-odd papers together, the ten pages filled out in ink and to the office immediately, but I did report my monthly form on the first of last month stating my part-time income, and it would seem enough to pay me this month's allotment. My form was returned to me for a bit of information I forgot to add. I returned it immediately. I received three threatening letters and now they have declared me ineligible because my papers are lost in some mail room somewhere. I have no money to run away with or on. What are they trying to prove? What more do they need to believe I'm still penniless and in need?"

"Welfare insists that you play by their rules, and then doesn't tell you what those rules are."



"There were 33 units in the building in which my child and I lived. There were two 80-gallon water heaters. One didn't work. So I never had hot water. I had to wash clothes in the middle of the night. My sink trap broke and it took forever for the caretaker to come. Then he didn't fix it — he took the trap out and I didn't get a new trap for five weeks. I went 23 days without a stove when it stopped working. My hall mailbox was broken for three months, and I had to go to the Post Office to pick up my mail. There were dog feces in the halls. Five or six caretakers came and went while I was there."



"Welfare doesn't allow women to make their own decisions."

"Women are being 'helped' by the very institutions responsible for the condition of their poverty. I run across so many people who are working in the area of helping who are saying in so many words it's her own fault she's in this position — it is the greatest single factor in keeping her where she is."

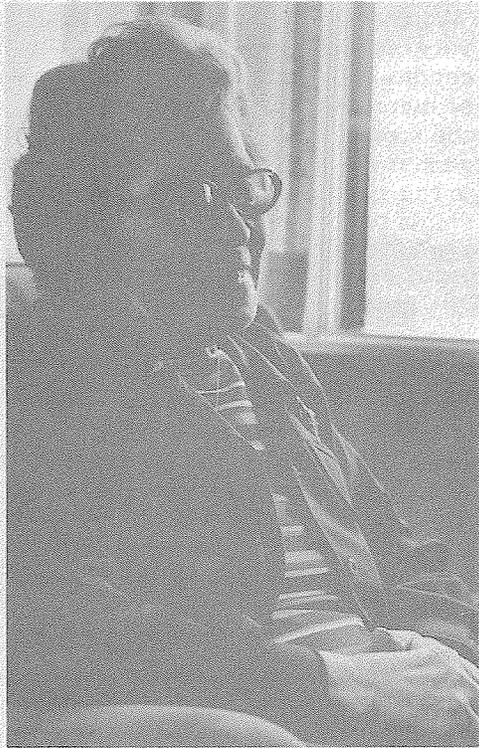


"Families on AFDC should be allowed to have ownership of one home for personal family use excluded from computing resources or income. The stability of the family can be seriously affected by forcing a family to sell a home because of the equity in it. The family is then forced to find inadequate housing on a sub-standard, inadequate budget. House payments are often lower than current rental rates."



"I was awarded our family home in the divorce settlement. I tried to get a loan to fix up some of the things my husband hadn't been willing to do. I was told I'd have to refinance the whole house if I wanted a loan. I had a low-interest 5 percent loan on the mortgage I owed, and they wanted me to pay all that extra interest. I didn't get the money for repairs. Soon afterward I had to sell the house anyway. Between payments to NSP and taxes — my taxes went up in just a few years from \$400 per year to over \$1,000 — I couldn't afford it. But I would have liked to keep my child in his own neighborhood, in his own school..."

# OLDER WOMEN



Growing old in America tends to bring with it a multitude of problems affecting the quality of food, shelter, and physical and emotional well-being. These problems are heightened by the fact that the elderly constitute an increasing proportion of the population.

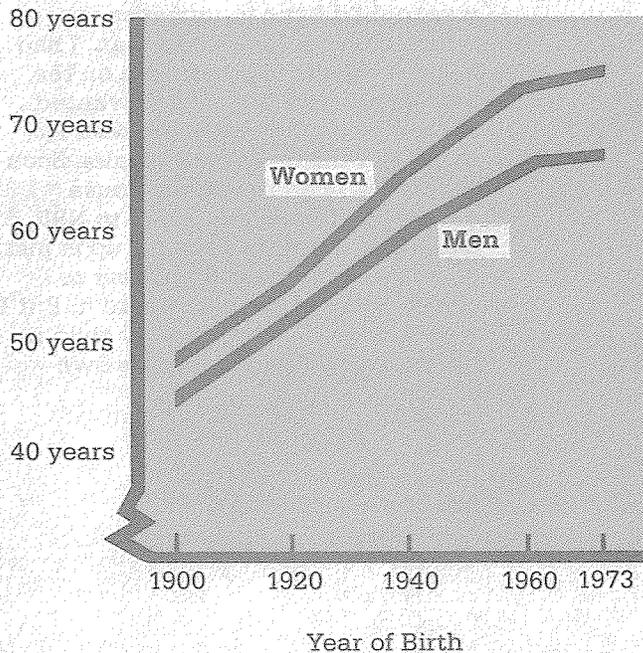
At the turn of the century, the average life expectancy in the U.S. at birth was 48 years for a female child. In 1973, it was 75 years. The life span is slightly greater in Minnesota, and life expectancy at birth is now 77 years for women compared to 69 years for men.

The over-65 proportion of the population, which was 4 percent of the total population in 1900, is now around 11 percent of the total population of Minnesota. For women, the proportion is even higher — 12.4 percent — and in some Minnesota counties the proportion ranges up to 15 percent.

According to projections by the State Demographer, the proportion of elderly could reach 19 percent in some counties by the year 2000, and these higher concentrations will most often be in rural, sparsely populated areas. The projections also show that the most rapid increases in the over-65 group will come in the highest age categories, primarily the 80-and-over group.

**Life span in the U.S. has increased dramatically since 1900, with increases greatest for women.**

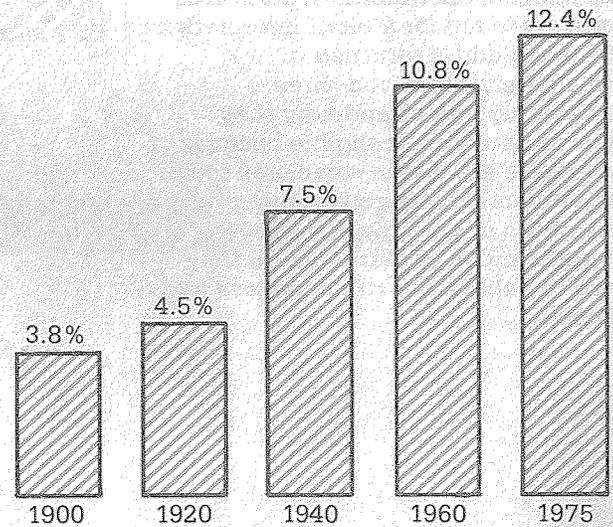
Life expectancy at birth



Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census

**Elderly women in Minnesota constitute an increasing proportion of the total female population**

Women age 65 and above as percent of female population



Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census (1975 estimated)

Not only have the elderly become a larger proportion of the total population, but the ratio of women to men within the elderly population has shifted substantially. At the turn of the century, older men outnumbered older women. These proportions are now reversed, and in the last 20 years older women have been outnumbering older men in increasing numbers. Estimates are that there were 66,000 more women than men above age 65 in Minnesota in 1975, and projections are that by the year 2000 there will be 98,000 more women than men.

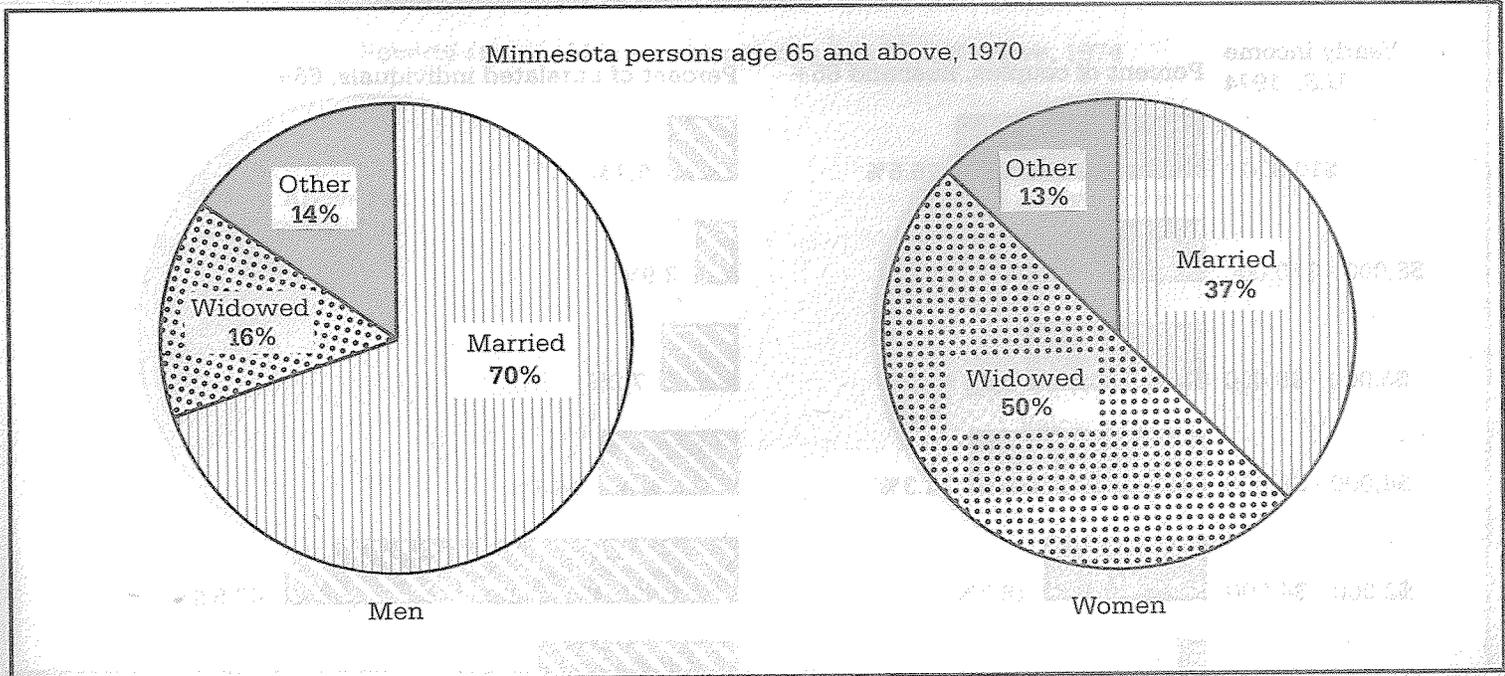
Because of their greater numbers, substantial differences exist in the marital status of older women compared to older men. In Minnesota in 1970, there were four times as many widows as there were widowers. While slightly more than one-third of elderly women are married with husband present, over two-thirds of Minnesota men are married with wife present.

### Women age 65 and above increasingly outnumber men

Year	Ratio Women/Men
1900	89/100
1950	99/100
1975	136/100
2000	148/100

Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census  
State Planning Agency

### Most elderly men are married and most elderly women are widowed

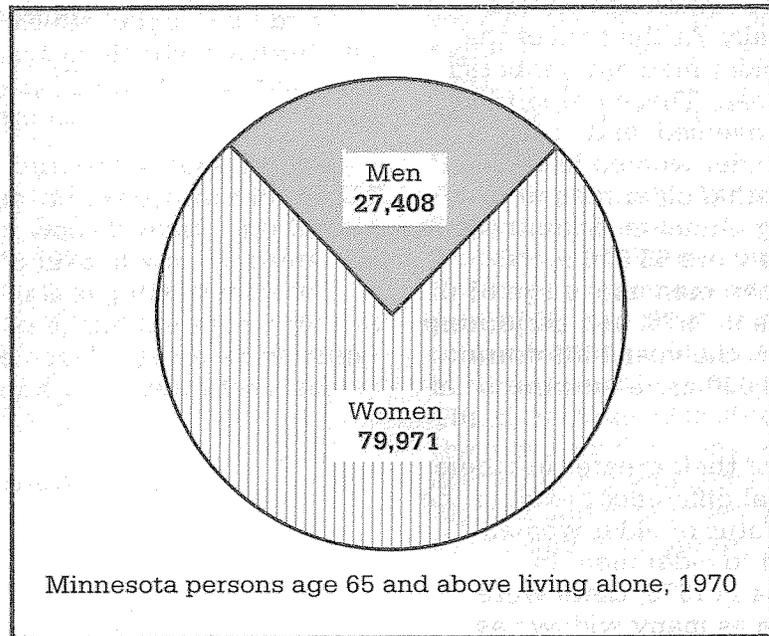


Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census

To be old and female is in most cases to be alone. As expressed by one worker for the elderly in testimony to the Council, "Widowhood presents the single most disruptive crisis of all transitions in the life cycle. Unprepared for new friendships, often women made friends through their husbands' contacts. They nurtured their husbands and never learned to take care of themselves. Or else they were so taken care of by their husbands that they do not know how to manage bills, checking accounts, stocks, insurance, and investments."

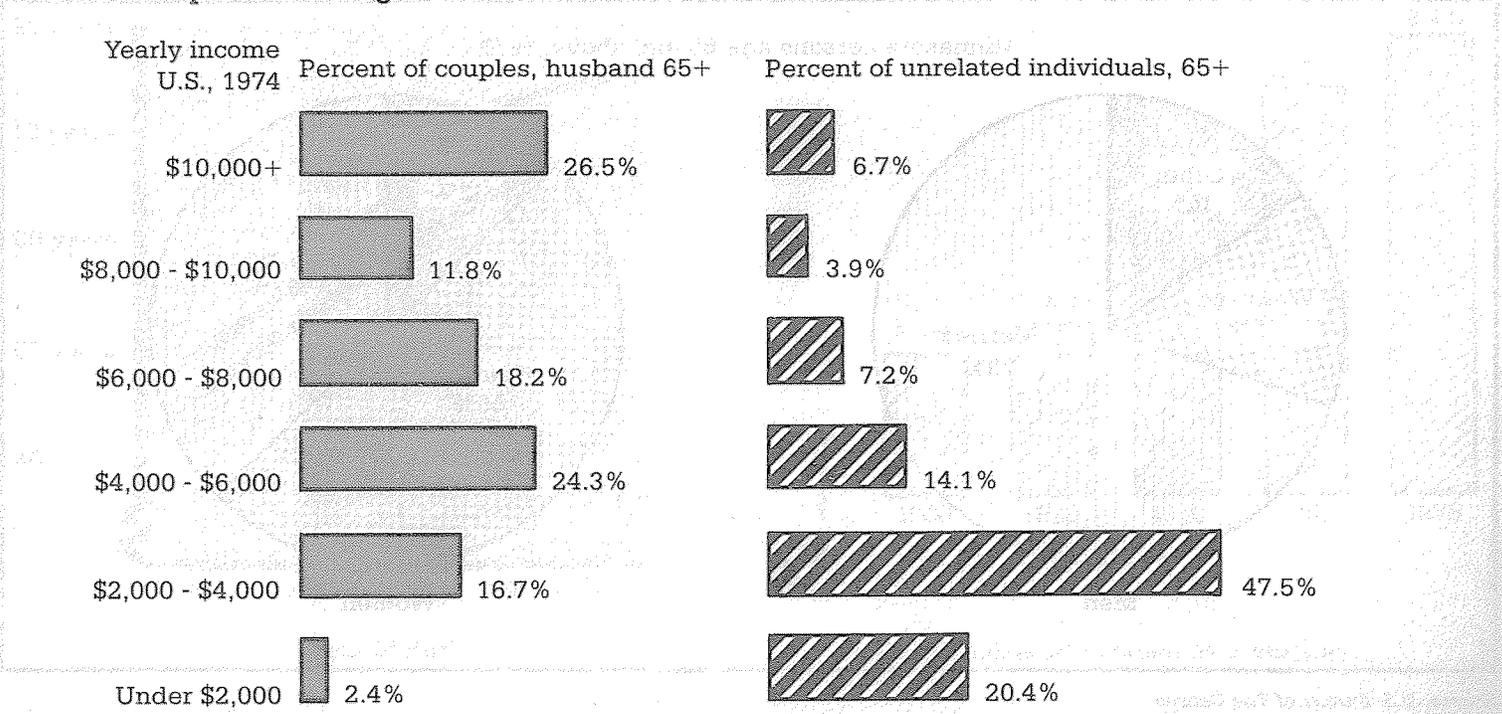
"From father to husband, older women have been taken care of and not trained to be assertive, to take charge, to make decisions, to realize they would be alone. This is a mobile society, children move, neighborhoods change, and the scripts change with each passage."

**Almost three times more elderly women than men live alone**



Source: Governor's Citizens Council on Aging

**Older persons living alone or with non-relatives tend to have low incomes**



Source: U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare

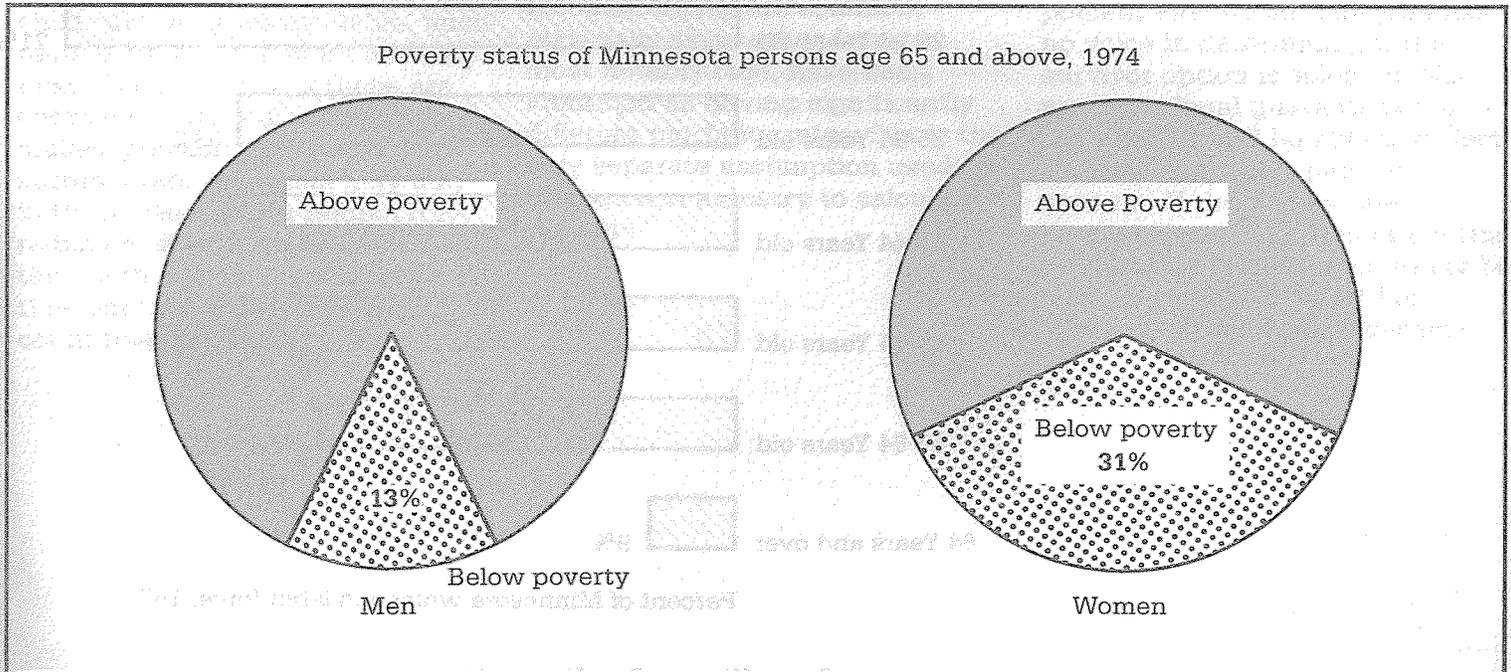
While aging brings dilemmas for both men and women, it appears that women are more dramatically affected, in part because women constitute an increasing proportion of the elderly population, but also because of the impact on the economic value placed on their social roles during their lifetimes. As a report prepared by the Governor's Citizen's Council on Aging notes, "Older women not only experience the difficulties related to retirement and losses of family and friends, but must also deal with the low economic status related to their sex."

Of the 248,000 women in Minnesota aged 65 and older, almost one-third live below the poverty level. This is a decrease from the 1970 proportions because of increased social security benefits, but still represents a substantial proportion of the elderly. Women's low economic status is related to inflation, to their work force patterns, to the effects of job and salary discrimination, and to policies affecting retirement benefits and

inheritance. As listed by the Council on Aging:

- The work history of women is usually of shorter duration, is often discontinuous, and women tend to occupy low-paying jobs;
- Fewer women than men are eligible for private pension plans and benefits;
- Those women who receive survivors' benefits from their deceased husbands' pensions rarely receive full retirement benefits;
- A widow in Minnesota may be required to pay inheritance tax on the full value of a small business or farm although she has worked in that business all her life.

**Elderly women have a high probability of being below the poverty level**



Source: U.S. Bureau of The Census (estimated)

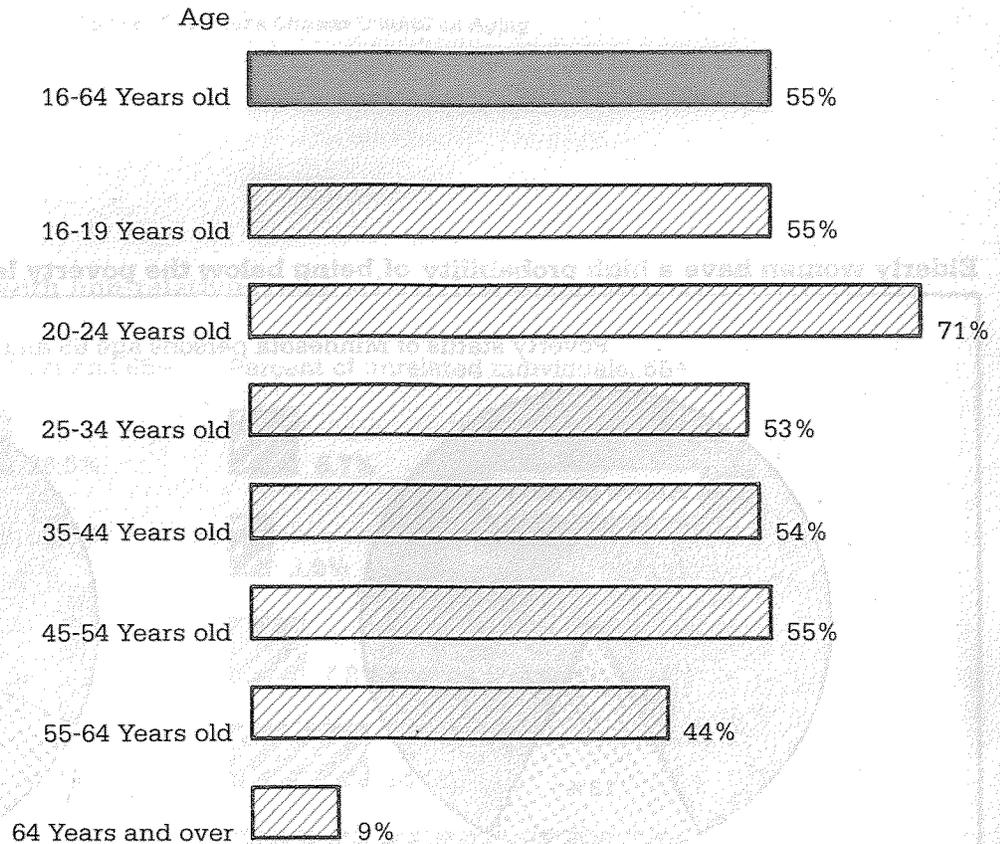
Women who are now in retirement or reaching retirement age have lived during a period of enormous change in the work lives of women. Many of these women first went to work during World War II, as a patriotic duty to "keep the war effort going" in the absence of male workers lost to the draft.

Some of these women are still employed, but overall labor force participation drops sharply after age 65. In Minnesota in 1975, 44 percent of women aged 55-64 were employed; for those above age 65, it was 9 percent. As labor force participation drops, poverty increases. Among women 65 and over who live alone, the impact of poverty is most severe.

Education seems to be a positive factor in keeping older women at work. Women with a high school education are more likely to be in the labor force at age 65 or over than women who have only an eighth or ninth grade education. The impact of a high school diploma is even greater among minority women.

As the changes in women's participation in the labor force continue, more women will work for longer hours and more years than at present. If current patterns continue, it is likely that women will remain in their jobs rather than drop out during childrearing and during the pre-retirement period. Some studies have estimated that at least 75 percent of women in their fifties will be employed by the year 2000. But only if women's earnings increase to somewhere near the level of men's will their retirement benefits increase enough to prevent much of their present poverty.

**Women's labor force participation decreases at higher ages**



Percent of Minnesota women in labor force, 1975

Source: Minnesota State Planning Agency

Women's work patterns have a major impact on the type and amount of retirement benefits for which they qualify. Fewer women than men are eligible for private pension benefits. A survey of social security beneficiaries who retired in 1968-69 cited in the Council on Aging report showed that those workers least likely to be covered by pensions were those in the lower paid positions, especially in the service industries and retail trade, where the majority of women are found.

Most pension plans compute benefits by a percentage of annual earnings multiplied by years of service. Those who work the longest with the highest earnings receive the largest pensions. The effects of past employment discrimination therefore have an adverse effect on the pension benefits women do receive. One national study in 1973 found the median benefit for women to be \$970 per year, compared with a median for men of \$2,080 per year.

The reality of the situation is that women not only drop out of the labor force to bear children, but frequently, because of the poor child care facilities available, must remain outside the work force to raise children. Even if these are choices the woman willingly makes, pension rights are often surrendered. A woman may not, in these cases, even temporarily reduce her work hours to spend time with her child because part-time earnings normally do not count toward pension eligibility.

Age qualifications at both ends of the spectrum also discriminate against women. Many plans do not include credit for employment before age 25 or after age 60, the years when the percentage of working women peaks, and some require that coverage under the plan begin before a specified age, typically 40 or 45. The woman who chooses to return to work after raising a family may either be too old to participate in the pension plan or may not be able to work enough years before mandatory retirement provisions force her to retire. And, of course, any break in service of even a year or two may destroy the continuous eligibility provisions of many plans.

Actuarial assumptions are also used by the pension industry to discriminate against women who are wage earners. Pension managers use these tables to require higher contributions by women or to pay smaller benefits to women than to men, given an equal contribution into the fund for men and women employees. Complaints charging sex discrimination in the use of actuarial tables are common, especially since other factors, most notably race, have been identified as having significantly different mortality rates. Sex is the only separate assumption used by the pension industry to calculate benefits.

Women who have never worked outside the home fare at least as badly as women who have been in the labor market. Nowhere is the need for income security greater than for this group of elderly women, yet only two percent of elderly widows of employees covered by pensions were receiving survivors' benefits in 1974.

The plight of the widow under private pension plans is attributed to a number of factors. First, there is currently no requirement that a private pension plan provide survivor's rights. The Federal Employer Retirement Security Act of 1974 established some guidelines, but did little to improve survivor's benefits. Although many pension plans do offer a survivor's benefit option, they often require that the male wage earner reduce his own benefits to provide for the possibility that his wife will survive him. Often the need to preserve his full pension and his belief that he will live into retirement keep the wage earner from electing the survivor option; in fact, only an estimated 5 to 15 percent ever do so. The wife has no voice in determining if the survivor option is selected. Nor are there legal guarantees that the widows will be able to collect on their husband's pension account. If the widow does receive something, it is rarely the full pension benefit, and it may be only 50 percent of what her husband would have received.

Social Security benefits — Federal Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance benefits — provide income maintenance for the majority of older American women. The number of women receiving benefits as retired workers multiplied twenty-fold between 1950 and 1971, while the number of male beneficiaries rose less than six-fold. Although women are increasingly entering the rolls as retired workers, in 1970 approximately one-half the women receiving social security benefits were covered as dependents of their husbands.

Since the employment history of women is normally of a shorter duration and the pattern of employment results in lower paying jobs, the average social security benefits of women are less than those of men. During the past two decades, the average benefits paid to women have represented 75 to 80 percent of the average paid to retired men, and June 1976 payments averaged \$2,340 for women and \$2,937 for men nationwide.

A 1972 report on women and social security said that women's disadvantaged position with respect to receipt of benefits was the result of four factors: (1) women earn less than men; (2) more women retired earlier than men at reduced benefits; (3) more women are receiving dependents' benefits, which are lower than the amount paid to the wage earner; and (4) more women are in the special over-72 age category.

Women's work at home — housekeeping activities and the care of children and other family members who are ill or disabled — has not been considered employment for social security purposes. Dependency benefits, added to the law soon after its

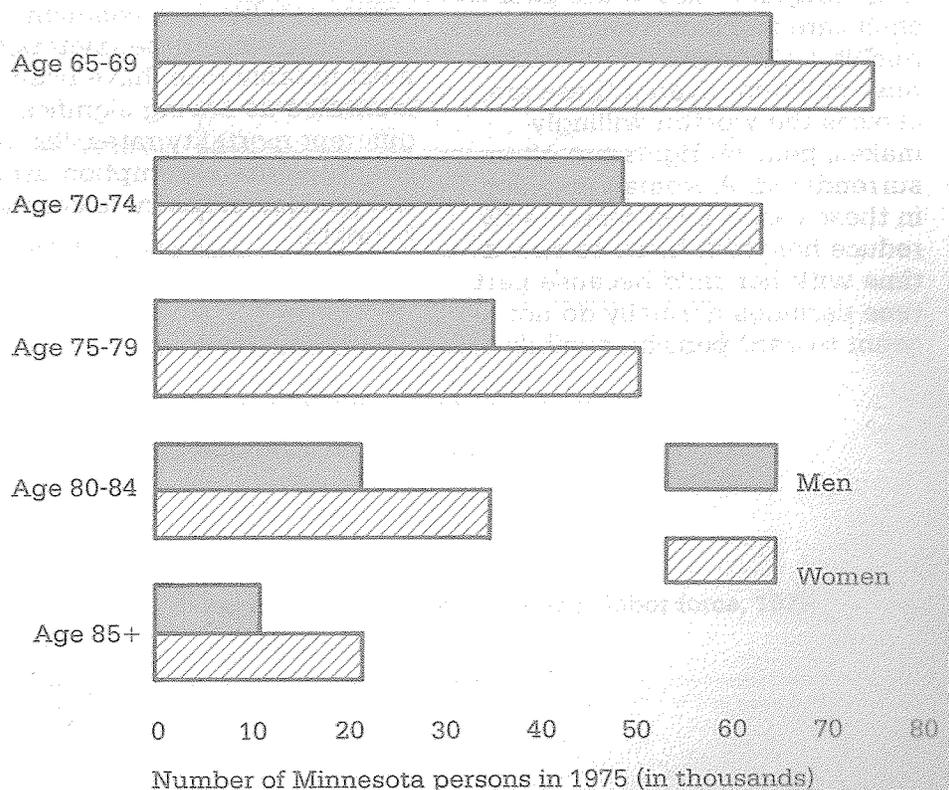
passage, do not ensure the security they were intended to provide. The benefits are based on the husband's earnings and in effect belong to him. In case of divorce, the wife loses her rights to dependency benefits unless the marriage lasted at least 20 years. The number of years is arbitrary and based on the fact of marriage, not on an individual homemaker's contribution to the economic security of the family.

The concept that the benefits are the man's also means that homemakers have no coverage for disability, even though loss of their services would cost most families money. Women who are older than their husbands have an additional problem in that they do not become eligible for benefits until their husbands reach 65, or longer if they decide to postpone retirement.

The rules affecting widow's benefits also cause problems. Widows are not entitled to benefits from the time their youngest child reaches 18 until they themselves reach 60 or become totally disabled. Many widows find themselves in desperate need of a job at age 50 — with no recent work record and few skills that would enable them to find decent jobs. These women find themselves in the same plight as the homemakers displaced by separation or divorce.

Removal of the inequities in the social security system and inheritance tax law has begun, but the question of the value to be placed on women's unpaid work in the home and who should pay the "contribution" or cost of such work continues to be discussed with conflicting points of view.

Older women outnumber older men at all ages, and ratios increase with increasing age

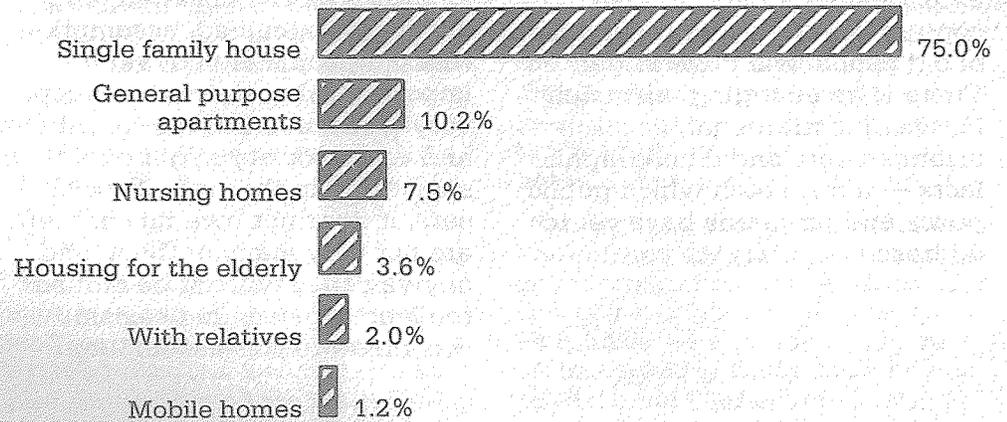


Source: Minnesota State Planning Agency

Despite increases in special housing for the elderly and in nursing homes, most older women continue to live in single family residences. For women on reduced incomes, this creates problems in health care and other social services. Medicare, upon which most older persons depend for their health needs, provides little help for the woman who remains in her own home. As stated by the Council on Aging, "The overall focus of Medicare has been on acute care and hospitalization, rather than on a continuing health maintenance. For example, in order to be eligible for home health services, a person must first have been hospitalized for three days in a row, need part-time skilled nursing care, be confined to one's home, and be certified by a physician as needing home health care for further treatment of a condition for which services were rendered as a bed patient in a hospital or skilled care facility."

In addition to home health care, many women on lowered incomes lack other services which would help them remain in their homes. Homemaker and housekeeping assistance, chore services, transportation, and communal or home-delivered meals would help to support them in their

### Most older persons live in a single family house



Percent of Minnesota persons age 65 and above, 1975

Source: Metropolitan Senior Federation

communities. In addition, many elderly persons need legal assistance and social and recreational activities.

The Council on Aging also noted the need for information and referral programs for the elderly: "Though social services are offered, often people in need of long term care and services are unaware of the full range of

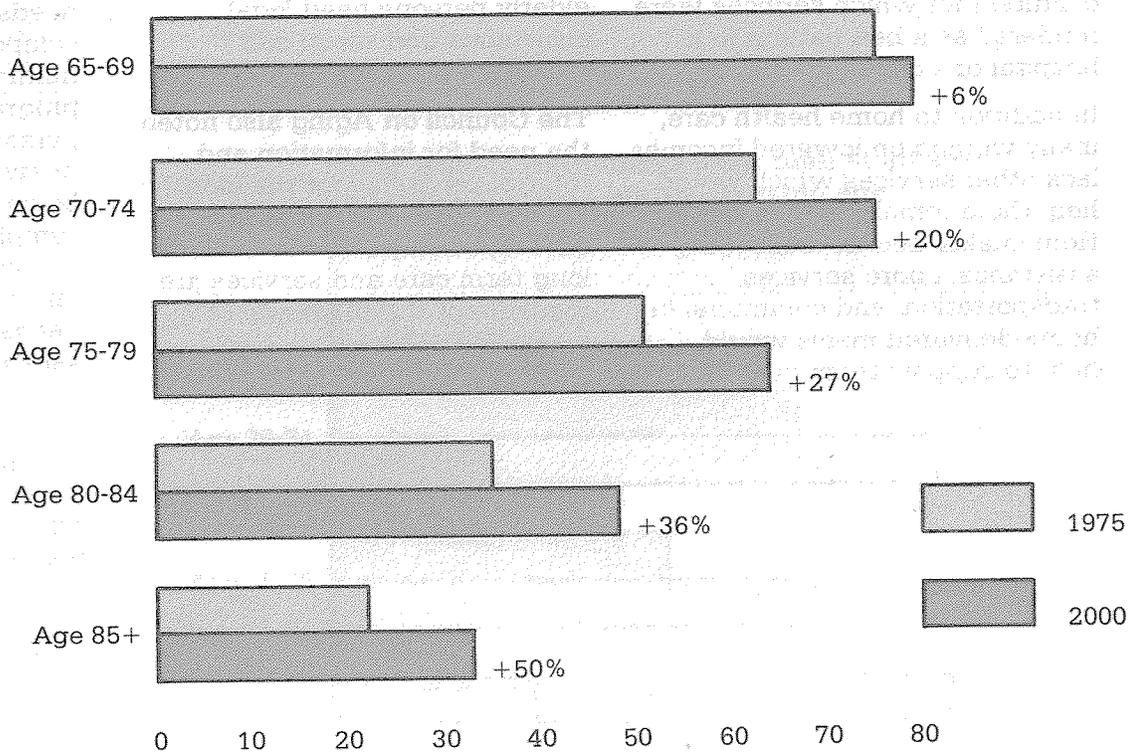
services available to meet their needs. This problem is compounded by the increased number of federal and state programs designed to serve older persons." Elderly women may be unaware of such programs, may be confused and frightened by the complex system and forms, be physically unable to reach an office where they can make their needs known, or be too proud to seek the kind of help they need.

Minnesota faces a long period, extending well into the 21st century, during which the number of old people will grow larger. There is an emerging mismatch between institutional arrangements and demographic facts — a mismatch which public policy and programs have yet to address.

Americans have operated for a long time on the unstated, and usually unexamined, assumption that old people are not very important, that they cannot cope very well, have little to contribute, and while society might owe them something in the way of social care, it does not owe much, there are not very many of them, and anyway, they will not be around too long. Ageism and sexism contribute to this assumption.

The end to that assumption has been slow in coming. But as testimony before the Council would substantiate, it is time to rethink the nature of various social institutions that are concerned with the elderly, and to revise income maintenance, health care, housing, and other social programs that serve older women.

**Population projections to 2000 show increases in elderly women, particularly in higher age groups**



Number of Minnesota women (in thousands) and percent increase.

Source: Minnesota State Planning Agency

## WOMEN'S VOICES

"I think it is very important that older women remain in their own neighborhood in the familiar scenes, their church, friends, social contacts. These are all very important. When an older woman has these she has that warm feeling that comes with being loved, not the lonely faces we see on many seniors."



"Today we had our wills prepared. The attorney told me that even though our assets are in joint tenancy, I would have a difficult time proving that I had earned a considerable part of our estate. I believe the burden of proof is on the wrong party."

"My husband was sheriff of the county for 16 years. We lived in the jail for 14 years, and when my health began to fail we moved to our own home. I continued to cook for 30 inmates — seven days a week. Part of my husband's responsibility as sheriff was to feed the prisoners. I assumed that responsibility, as well as answering phones, doorbells, messages when my husband was out on calls. The county paid me no salary, and I receive no social security or retirement funds for 16 years of work."

"I'm sure there are other women who have worked shoulder to shoulder with their husbands an entire lifetime, and are in similar situations."

"When I was married, like most farm women, because of financial necessity I worked in the fields. The day started with feeding and milking the cows and other chores related to dairying, the same in the evening, and I was an equal partner with my husband. We would collectively do the housework and canning, many times far into the night."

"The farm mortgage, chattel mortgage, and all other debts were in both our names, and for which I was equally liable. Our income tax was filed jointly. Women are treated as equals when it comes to paying the bills, filing income tax and social security on the income we have helped to make."

"But when we file for social security, all of a sudden we are dependents."

"When I filed for social security they arrogantly asked me if I had worked. Evidently farm labor is not considered work. Now we face deprivations because of inflation — everything going up many-fold — so what we labored so hard for has gone down the drain. Social security has not kept pace with inflation. Women always came last as far as their home was concerned, as the bills for farming had to be paid first, and usually there was not much left after the farming bills were paid. Their hope to live decently in their old age has been smashed and they find themselves further deprived."

"We are told to plan for the future. How can you plan for anything when the cost of living triples or more?"



"Inflation has reduced our incomes in terms of what we can buy. Medicare assumes less of the cost of our health care. We have no help with drugs, dental expenses, and optical goods. Fortunately, I live in low-income cost-subsidized housing with dignity. But even that is threatened by the withdrawal of funds for its operations."

"The role of older women seeking work in today's society is a tragedy. Very little attention has been paid to this problem. As a mother of a growing family she is used to being loved and appreciated. She has been the heart of the home and without her the home and family falls apart."

"Now comes a change in her status. The children are grown up and no longer depend upon their mother. She is young enough — in her fifties or early sixties — and wants to be part of the workaday world, but where to go in this youth-oriented society, where the demand is for youth."



"Some people say older women can work and live in the homes of other people, but that is not the answer to the problem. What about their part in building a wonderful state? What about their back-breaking years and sacrifice for us all? There must be a reward somewhere along the line and we must work to make their dreams come true."

# CONCLUSIONS

A significant shift in the composition of the poverty population in Minnesota has occurred in recent years. No longer is poverty distributed throughout the population, but has become concentrated in an increasing number of female-headed households. Although all female-headed households are vulnerable to economic hardship, those composed of mothers with their dependent children and those composed of elderly women living alone are most severely affected.

Specifically, the Council on the Economic Status of Women finds that:

- A sharp increase in the number of female-headed households in Minnesota in the past 15 years has meant a dramatic rise in the number of women and children living in poverty.

- Women are economically vulnerable because they do not earn income or amass wealth to the same extent as men. Among the reasons are:

Women are encouraged to prepare for work in the home and for childrearing rather than for a vocation or career;

Women have a tendency to look upon employment as a temporary or stop-gap endeavor rather than a life long job or serious career;

Women frequently work less than full time even when employed because of their family responsibilities. Thus, they must handle two jobs rather than one, putting them at a disadvantage in the labor market;

Women are segregated into "female" occupations characterized by low pay and minimal opportunities for advancement;

Education does not assist women in job advancement or to high salaries to the same extent that it helps men;

Women are handicapped by inflation. When raises are given as a percent of present wages, a low-paid (often female) worker receives less of a dollar amount than a high-paid (usually male) worker;

Women as single parents do not have an opportunity to be part of a two-earner family, with access to a second income to assist them to stay above the poverty level.

- The mounting divorce rate and the rising illegitimacy rates among teenagers are factors which have contributed significantly to the shift to female-headed families.

- With the increase in divorce, many women find themselves unable to support themselves and their children. If they do not receive alimony or if their child support payments are too meager or not forthcoming, they turn to public assistance for survival.

- Female heads of households want employment, not more or better welfare, but they are often unable to find or lack the skills and training required for jobs that will support themselves and their families.

- Welfare agencies are often a source of confusion, frustration, and humiliation for the women who wish to utilize them. Access to assistance is far too difficult.

- Adequate, affordable housing in good repair in a safe neighborhood is a major need for most female-headed families.

- Elderly women, an increasing proportion of the population, also suffer from poverty because of factors related to their sex. Among these are:

A work history which affords fewer Social Security and either private or governmental pension benefits than would ordinarily be available to a man;

Limited or no survivor pension benefits following death of a husband;

Disadvantage of inheritance tax requirements which may require payment on a business or farm even if the woman has invested labor and money in it.

- Elderly women suffer from lack of home health and social services as well as other kinds of assistance which would permit them to remain in their own homes.

- Elderly women are often lost to the system that could help them because they are unable to make their needs known or have too much pride to do so.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## EDUCATION

- Teacher and counselor training programs should include information about the economic implications of the changing roles of women.
- Curriculum for elementary, secondary, and vocational education should be developed to eliminate the effects of sex-role stereotyping.
- CETA, WIN, and other federally-funded training programs should be continually monitored to ensure that women are not trained and placed only in unskilled or dead-end jobs, and that they are paid at the prevailing wage rate.
- Education officials should encourage programs in the public schools for counseling, support, and follow-up for pregnant students to enable them to continue their education and receive training which will help them become self-supporting.
- The Department of Education and the Department of Human Rights should vigorously and promptly enforce anti-discrimination laws and monitor their effectiveness.
- Education institutions should provide flexibility and support services such as child care and financial aids to help single parents continue their schooling.

## EMPLOYMENT

- Legislation should be initiated to institute flexible work schedules for state employees and should provide incentives to private employers to do likewise. Programs should include:
  - “Flexitime” systems which provide that employees can select their work hours on full-time jobs;
  - Part-time jobs available at all levels with full guarantees of job security, pro-rated benefits, worker's compensation, and inclusion in bargaining units.
- Pregnancy leave should be expanded and protected so that a woman may take time off from a job without losing seniority, advancement opportunities, job security, or pension rights.
- Leaves for child rearing should be legally protected so that parents do not lose job security or seniority when taking extended leave for child care.
- State and federal government should provide incentives for the training and placement of women in non-traditional jobs, especially within government-sponsored programs such as CETA, WIN, and Employment Services.
- The state should provide incentives for private industry to develop jobs at more than minimum wage and to make these jobs available throughout the state, particularly in rural areas.
- The state should approve public funding for programs only when there are not large salary disparities between jobs traditionally held by women and those traditionally held by men.
- Divorce settlements should include provisions for education and job training for women who have not been employed outside the home.
- The state minimum wage should be brought to the federal level and tip credit should be eliminated.
- The state and federal government should provide support for child care on a sliding fee scale basis.
- The state and its various agencies should provide data on the economic status of women on a regular basis, including data on minority race women.

## INCOME SUPPORT

- Criteria should be developed to provide divorced spouses and children with a level of support adequate to their needs and providing an equitable standard of living for both spouses subsequent to the divorce.
- Methods of enforcement of child support collections should be strengthened and should include:
  - Title IV-D child support collection methods which provide help for both welfare and non-welfare recipients and which provide public information programs;
  - Title IV-D regulations changed to add cost of collection to the amount collected from the payee;
  - Automatic deduction from wages for child or spousal support in cases of continued non-support;
  - Methods of collection without regard to financial ability to obtain legal aid.

- Methods should be developed to have a judicial review of changed economic circumstances of divorced spouses without regard to ability to obtain legal aid.
- Welfare programs should look at total family income in determining eligibility and payment standard rather than making distinctions between two-parent families, one-parent families, or the employment status of the parents.
- Welfare work requirements should take into account the ages of recipients' children so that parents of elementary-age children are not required to be employed full time. Special efforts should be made to develop part-time job opportunities for parents which match their children's school schedules.
- Housing subsidies for low-income persons should cover the cost of housing at current prices and should apply to neighborhoods where such housing is available.
- Welfare agencies should provide assistance to recipients to provide damage deposits for rental housing.
- Anti-discrimination policies should be strengthened to protect women with children in their ability to obtain rental housing.
- The state Housing and Finance Agency should develop programs which provide more home-ownership opportunities for low-income women with children.
- Simple, comprehensive information on assistance programs should be readily available to all potential recipients, and access to programs should be consolidated and simplified.
- Welfare workers should be trained to routinely inform recipients of maximum benefits for which they qualify. Workers should also be trained to inform recipients of available assistance outside the welfare system such as educational opportunities, housing programs, and counseling services.
- Attitudinal studies of social service workers should be made in terms of their relationships with welfare recipients.

## **OLDER WOMEN**

- Public information on programs and services for the elderly should be widely available throughout the state.
- All government-funded health programs for the elderly should stress prevention and home care instead of the present emphasis on illness and institutionalization.
- Community support services should be readily available to enable older persons to remain in their homes and communities. Such services should include housekeeping assistance, chore services, transportation, communal or home-delivered meals, day activity centers, and legal and financial counseling.
- Legislation should be enacted requiring pension plans to provide notice to spouses about the availability of survivors' benefits and whether or not such benefits have been elected by the worker-spouse.
- Present pension reform should be improved so that all widows of pension recipients are eligible for ongoing benefits.
- State employee pension plans should be required to include survivors' benefits as part of their coverage.
- Actuarial tables used in computing pension benefits should not be sex-differentiated.
- The social security system should be changed to provide that persons develop individual eligibility regardless of marital status, that such eligibility be portable, and that coverage and credit be given for homemaking work.
- The legislature should reform inheritance tax laws to give credit to widows who have contributed to farm or business enterprises in cooperation with their husbands.
- The displaced homemakers program should be continued and expanded to provide services to persons throughout the state.
- Training and job opportunities should be made available for older women including opportunities for self-employment.
- The Department of Human Rights should vigorously and promptly enforce anti-discrimination laws related to age.

# ABOUT THE COUNCIL

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## PURPOSE

The legislation creating the Council states that its role is to "study all matters relating to the economic status of women in Minnesota, including matters of credit, family support and inheritance laws relating to the economic security of the homemaker, educational opportunities, career counseling, contributions of women to Minnesota's per capita and family incomes and state revenues, job and promotion opportunities, and laws and business practices constituting barriers to the full participation of women in the economy."

In addition, the Council shall also study "the adequacy of programs, services and facilities relating to families in Minnesota including single-parent families and members beyond the nuclear family."

## SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

- January 1977 — St. Paul —  
"Re-Entry" Women; Displaced Homemakers
- February 1977 — St. Paul —  
Job Counseling and Training
- March 1977 — St. Paul —  
Vocational Education
- June 1977 — St. Cloud —  
Low-income and Welfare
- June 1977 — St. Cloud —  
Special Problems of Rural Women
- July 1977 — Minneapolis —  
Low-income, the Elderly, Minority Women, Welfare
- August 1977 — Detroit Lakes —  
Open hearing: Economic Status of Women
- August 1977 — Virginia —  
Open hearing: Economic Status of Women
- September 1977 — St. Paul —  
Economic Implications of Divorce
- October 1977 — Marshall —  
Open hearing: Economic Status of Women
- October 1977 — Rochester —  
Open hearing: Economic Status of Women
- November 1977 — St. Paul —  
Family Social Services
- January 1978 — Minneapolis —  
Women of Color

## MEMBERS

Eighteen members serve on the Council: five Senators, five House members, and eight public members appointed by the Governor. Legislative appointments are:

### SENATE

Nancy Brataas, Rochester  
Bob Lewis, St. Louis Park  
Bill Luther, Brooklyn Center  
Allan Spear, Minneapolis  
Emily Staples, Plymouth

### HOUSE

Linda Berglin, Minneapolis  
Stanley Enebo, Minneapolis  
Mary Forsythe, Edina  
Arlene Lehto, Duluth  
Russell Stanton, Arco

### COUNCIL MEMBERS APPOINTED BY THE GOVERNOR ARE:

Lurline Baker, Duluth  
Virginia Erhard, Minnetonka  
JoAnn Kronick, South St. Paul  
Verna Lunz, Fairmont  
Sandra Melberg, Minneapolis  
Jane Preston, White Bear Lake  
Carol Ryan, St. Paul  
Anne Siren Levig, Virginia

# COUNCIL for the ECONOMIC **STATUS** **WOMEN**

This is the fourth in a series of reports by the Council on the Economic Status of Women, 400 SW State Office Building, St. Paul, MN 55155.

